M. L.

Gc
929.2
W3755w
1951914

REYNOLDS HISTORICAL
GENEALOGY COLLECTION

ALLEN COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY
3 1833 01436 2815

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2019

https://archive.org/details/centuryoniowafar00wear

Part I

A Century On

An

Iowa Farm

Dec. Creek Land Clay.

Iowa American Revolution
Bicentennial Commission
STATE HOUSE
DES MOINES, IOWA 50319

Published by Nishna Vale Press
Hastings, Iowa

Printed by Express Publishing Co.
Red Oak, Iowa.

1959

Otha D. Wearin

12

Wearin, Otha D
Century on an Iowa Farm

Book being xeroxed from Iowa Bicent record center

1951914

Mills Co.

A Century on an Iowa Farm

By Otha D. Wearin

1854 — Nishna — 1959

A Century On An Iowa Farm

"If you don't starve over there in the valley of the West Nishnabotna River, the Indians will probably kill you." This was the warning of the Coonville, (Glenwood) Iowa land agent to my grandfather, Otha Wearin, when he arrived in Mills County in October, 1854. On his way back from entering our land, he drew rein on his saddle horse at the top of the hill, a mile north of our house and looked out over the valley that was to be his home. The grass on the unbroken prairie was shimmering and waving in the autumn sunlight. Along the silver ribbon of the West Nishnabotna River, a half dozen bands of deer were grazing peacefully. Years later, he told his family that he decided right then and there, "If it was to be my lot to starve or be killed by the Indians, it would be the prettiest place I had ever seen in which to die." Otha Wearin spent the balance of his life in the valley of the Nishna and died there in 1902 but death did not come from starvation or violent Indians. Only an occasional band of Red Men frequented eastern Mills County after 1854. There were no railroads but the stages of a few lines rocked and rolled over deeply rutted trails on their way to Burlington, Fort Des Moines, and Council Bluffs, Iowa; Plattsmouth, Nebraska and St. Joseph, Missouri. A few were still running in 1880 when my father, Joe Wearin, was attending Tabor College at Tabor, Iowa.

In addition to my grandfather, his brothers, Josiah, Andrew, Harry and a sister, Experience (Aunt X as she was known) settled in the valley of the Nishna. They were the children of Michael Wearin of Harrison County, West Virginia and his wife, Mary Ann Coe, of near Athens, Ohio, who were married on August 26, 1821 at Nelsonville, Ohio. Mary Ann Coe was born September 29, 1802 and died July 30, 1839 at Athens, Ohio. Michael eventually reached the valley of the Nishna and spent his last days in the homes of sons, Otha and Josiah. He was buried in the family plot on the SE¼ NW¼ of Section 14, Township 72, Range 41 about one-half mile in a southwesterly direction from the site of our home, his body being removed on August 25, 1922 to the Malvern, Iowa cemetery.

The Gold Rush to California in 1849 was responsible for the establishment of the Wearin family in Iowa. The sons of Michael and Mary Ann Wearin were tenant farmers and "farm hands" who had followed their relatives, the Coe's and Robbin's to the vicinity of Valparaiso, Indiana. In 1850 my grandfather planned a trip to the gold fields. After a conference with his brother, Josiah, it was decided that the latter, being the older, would attempt the long trip on horseback to the West Coast. Otha agreed to "tend" the farm in Indiana and care for his brother's family during his absence.

Upon Josiah's return to Indiana, the brothers divided the profits of their two ventures on a fifty-fifty basis and started for the fertile lands of southwest Iowa, Otha on foot with a pack mare for his few belongings and Josiah and family in a covered wagon.

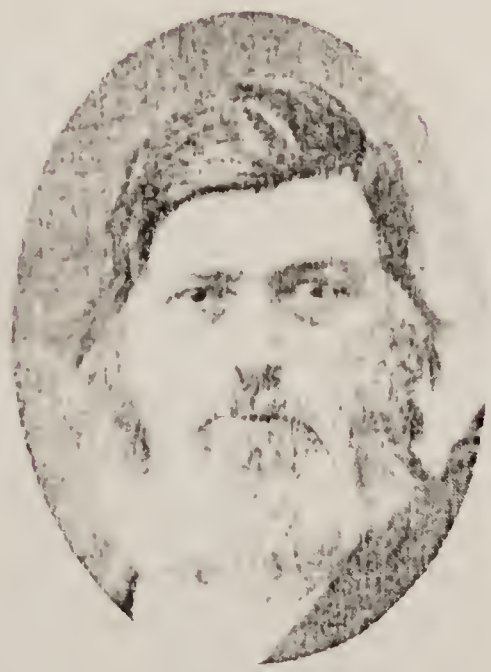
In the spring of 1855, my grandfather erected a clap-board cabin, sixteen by twenty-four feet, with a loft. It was the first building on our land and stood about fifty feet northeast of the northeast corner of our present home, two and one-half miles northwest of Hastings, Iowa.

The First Wearins In The Valley Of The Nishna

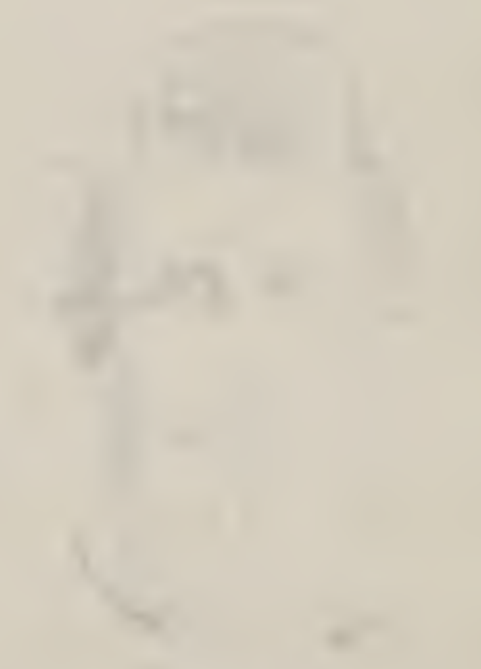
Josiah

Otha

Andrew



Harry



Martha Wortman Wearin

Valeria Elliott Wortman

It was to this humble cabin that he brought his bride, Martha Jane Wortman, on December 29th, 1859. She was the daughter of Jacob and Valeria Elliott Wortman, who resided in the nearby community of South Grove.

During their first winter they carried all of their water from a spring a quarter of a mile northwest of their home. When the weather became too severe for the daily trip, they gathered snow in a wash tub and melted it over a fire.

It was under such humble circumstances that my grandparents established their home along the Nishna. Four children, Charles Otha, Joseph Andrew (my father), William Henry and Mary Valeria (Mrs. A. B. Washburn) were born to them. A few months after the birth of their daughter, the thirty-three year old wife of Otha Wearin (born May 30, 1837) contracted typhoid fever. Pioneer medicine was too primitive to save her. She died on September 30, 1870, leaving her husband, three sorrowing little boys and a baby girl, very much alone in a new land. Her mother, Valeria Elliott Wortman, who had been blind since her early thirties, came to the troubled household to help her son-in-law hold the family together during the first trying weeks of the mother's absence. In blindness, she had made the trip by covered wagon from Ohio to Iowa with her husband and family. In a new land she never saw, with only the most primitive conveniences, she processed the food over an open hearth, spun and wove the cloth for their garments, gave birth to her eleven children, caring for and raising nine to maturity. When trouble came to her family or her neighbors, her faith, her intelligence and her deft fingers always came to their rescue. God could not have sent a stronger woman to Otha Wearin and his children in their hour of need. Mrs. Henry Dolph (Mary Wortman), a sister of Martha's, took the baby, Mary Valeria to raise. Otha Wearin had always been a quiet, unassuming man but he was more quiet and unassuming than ever now, as he made his way alone through

the rest of his years. His only interests were the raising of his family that he had promised Martha he would do, and the operation of his farms.

Early in the history of Nishna 1870, my grandfather, again responded to the urge of westward migration. In that year, he made a trip on horseback to Thayer County, Nebraska, where he purchased a considerable tract of land under the "entry law." This portion of his estate eventually became the property of his eldest son, Charles Otha Wearin and his youngest son, William Henry Wearin. The Iowa portion of his farming enterprise was divided betwen his daughter Mary Valeria Washburn and his son, Joseph Andrew Wearin.

Mary Valeria Washburn is still hale and hearty at 89. She resides on some of the same land, in the same community where her father established his home in October, 1854.

For a decade, following 1871, a procession of help, both strangers and relatives, came and went at Nishna. Some no doubt tried the patience of the head of the household but if they did, not even his children knew about it. A niece, Mary Lambert, her husband and son, Quisene (Quis) resided for a time in the home while she cooked for the family.

The Lamberts were eventually replaced by Frank Wortman, a brother of Martha's, his wife, Lena and their three children. Aunt Lena was a kind woman. She took the three motherless sons of her brother-in-law into her heart and began to create the semblance of a home in the primitive quarters. No one will ever understand just how she fit nine people, the extra help and sometimes the school teacher into the cramped quarters of the pioneer cabin.

This arrangement continued until early in the 1880's when my father, Joe (Joseph Andrew) took over as chief cook at Nishna. In those days the household consisted of my grandfather, his sons, Charles, Joe and Henry and from eight to twelve men during the farming season. My father kept the house in order and prepared all of the food on a wood-fired, sheet iron range.

On November 14, 1888, Joe was united in marriage to Mary Jane Donner, a neighbor girl who had been his childhood sweetheart in country school days. She was the daughter of Charles and Henrietta (Pontow) Donner. In that year the charming, husky German girl began her fifty-seven year reign as mistress of the Scotch-Irish household at Nishna.

Mary Jane took over a comparatively new house at Nishna that had been erected on the farm for its owners by Sam Purcell of Hastings, Iowa in 1884. In the years that followed, she remodeled and enlarged it on two occasions. It was in this house that my grandfather Wearin born March 22, 1826, died April 8, 1902. Eight months later, I was born in the same dwelling on January 10th, 1903. My uncle, Henry Wearin, who hitched a team to the cutter and drove to Emerson for the doctor, said it was the "damdest, coldest day he ever saw."

Mary Jane was an immaculate housekeeper. My father used to say of her, "She is an artist with a skillet," meaning that she was an excellent cook. She loved to entertain and was always the happiest when her house was filled with guests. Even now I can see her dining room, part of the last addition to her house before it burned, that was her pride and joy. The floor, the trim, the mirror backed cabinets that held her collection of cut glass were all of solid walnut, sawed and cured at Nishna.

The walls covered with light brown burlap to the plate rail and scenic wall paper above, created a feeling of spaciousness. The walnut table, a long oval when extended, set with gleaming white Haviland China, sparkling glass and sterling silver shining in the soft glow of gas light from a low hanging stained glass lamp excited many an exclamation of pleasure from the guests who dined there. They included relatives and friends, professional tramps, governors, wealthy people, senators, farmers, congressmen, ranchers, artists, cabinet members, authors, cowboys, local politicians and the children of the neighborhood who rode their ponies up to the back door for a handful of home-made ginger and sour-cream cookies.

No one will ever know how my mother managed much of the time without help, never with any more than one of the neighbor girls or a sister to assume part of her tasks.

The guests who have been entertained at Nishna have arrived by saddle horse, covered wagons, carriages, buggies, buckboards, farm wagons, bobsleds, cutters, automobiles, and airplanes. Some have come to call, to spend the night, a few days and often a few weeks.

The day after Christmas in 1924, the ground was covered with a heavy blanket of snow. The temperature had dropped to ten below zero. At four o'clock in the afternoon a fire was discovered in the basement of the house at Nishna. Before fire trucks could reach the scene over badly rutted roads, the house was engulfed in flames. By dark it had burned to the ground. Dozens of close neighbors flocked to the scene and worked desperately to rescue as much of the contents as possible. Quantities of things were saved but many other treasures including a little dog, Trixie, family heirlooms - - - Mary Jane's collection of cut glass in the dining room under which the fire started were lost.

The family spent the balance of the winter in a rented house in Hastings. In the spring of 1925 we began the construction of the brick colonial dwelling that stands about thirty feet behind the site of the west wall of the old house.

The architectural firm of Anderson and Spooner of Council Bluffs, Iowa prepared the plans and elevations. The contract for the basement and masonry work was let to the Tease Brothers Construction Company of Beatrice, Nebraska. Forrest Snodgrass of Emerson, Iowa was in charge of all wood framing and interior work. The outside wall construction is of brick and tile with a two inch air space between the two. The roof is of asbestos slate shingles. The main structure, two stories in height with full basement and attic is thirty-two feet in width and forty-eight feet in length with a 10x22 foot porch on each end. The trim on the first floor is of solid walnut grown at Nishna.

We started construction of the basement walls on June 25th, 1925 and moved into the new home on December 24th of the same year. In the spring of 1957 we enclosed the north porch. There have been no other major changes in the dwelling since its completion.

On January 2nd, 1931, I was united in marriage to Lola Irene Brazelton, daughter of Thomas Marion and Rosabell Gipe Brazelton, who resided one mile south of Hastings, Iowa. The wedding was held in the front room of the Brazelton farm home with Reverend J. R. Perkins of Council Bluffs officiating. In addition to our parents, there were two

"You bring me the fifty cents tomorrow, Othie."

Illustration by Clarence Ellsworth for "California Gold in an Iowa Valley", Los Angeles Branding Iron, March 1956. The scene portrays my Grandfather, Otha Wearin, arranging with the Postmaster of Valpariso, Indiana, to pay with a days labor the 50c postage due on the first letter received there in 1850, from his brother Josiah Wearin who was enroute to the California gold fields.

The above water color used on the cover of Wearin's Holiday Life, 1956.

guests present, Miss Louise M. Gwin of Omaha, Nebraska and Miss Pauline Blakney of Emerson, Iowa.

In 1928 as a kid of twenty-five, I was elected to the Iowa Legislature on the democrat ticket in Mills County. In 1930, I was re-elected and made an unsuccessful bid for minority floor leader.

In 1932, after a hard primary battle between six candidates in which no one received the necessary thirty-five percent majority, I was nominated for United States Congress by the democrats in a convention at the Chieftain Hotel in Council Bluffs, Iowa. I was elected in November of that year, re-elected in 1934 and in 1936. At the beginning of my third term I was elected by a majority of the democrat members of the House of Representatives to the Ways and Means Committee.

In 1938 I made an unsuccessful race for the democratic nomination for United States Senator from Iowa. In 1950 I was again defeated in an attempt to be nominated for the same office. In 1952 I lost a race for the democrat nomination for Governor of Iowa to our present governor, Hershel C. Loveless.

During the late fall of 1931, Lola and I decided to build a five room cottage on the grounds of the "Big House" as we referred to the home of my father and mother. We located it about 150 feet southwest of the latter. The contractor, Forrest Snodgrass of Emerson, Iowa was delayed by bad weather and part of the structure was without a roof all winter. Several times I shoveled the snow off of the sub-floor of the living room. It was completed early in the summer of 1932. We lived in it only a few months. After my election to the United States Congress in November of that year, it became imperative that I have an office in order that both households could have some semblance of privacy. The hard times and unemployment of the early 1930's brought hundreds of hungry democrats flocking to our door for jobs. We consolidated the two families and turned the "little house" into an Iowa branch of the Congressional office. Since that time it has housed most of my library, some of our hobbies, served as a part time office and guest house.

My father, who died October 2nd, 1937, devoted his entire life to the operation of the farm upon which he was born on May 26, 1864. He followed a strict program of crop rotation using red clover and timothy as his soil building crop, long before such precautions were considered necessary on river bottom land. He was one of the first to introduce alfalfa into the area and was an early advocate of tractor farming.

The so-called new practice of feeding livestock in the fields to improve the fertility of the soil is not new at Nishna. My grandfather was using it in 1860 and my father followed it throughout his lifetime. When he left his farm to his heirs it was producing more than it had ever produced in its history without the addition of a pound of commercial fertilizer.

His philosophy of life was rich and potent. It can be described in part by his answer to a question. When U.S. Highway No. 34, one mile south of our home was being paved, one of his friends said, "Joe, aren't you sorry you are so far away from the pavement?" He smiled faintly and

commented dryly, "No, I am glad I am as close as I am." He suffered many physical handicaps during the last years of his life, including total blindness.

In 1938, my mother, Mary Jane was stricken with her first heart attack. The frequent reoccurrence of the ailment was a constant problem for her during the remaining seven years of her life. She seldom left Nishna during that time, except for one trip to Washington, D. C. and one to Gordon, Nebr., devoting most of her days to our family, especially her two granddaughters. The end came for her on March 6th, 1945.

Our daughter, Martha Jane Wearin, was born December 31, 1937. I had only three days with the young lady before having to leave for Washington, D. C. to attend the second session of the 75th Congress of which I was a member. For the first year of her life I had only fleeting glimpses of her between service in Congress, the campaign for the nomination for U.S. Senator and the closing of my Washington office. In the fall of 1938 I returned to Nishna to begin farming again.

Our daughter, Rebecca Joe Wearin, was born December 29, 1941. Both of our girls have grown up at Nishna. They received the first eight years of their education at our nearby country school, Wearin District Number 5.

Since the end of the six year interlude in Washington, D. C. Lola and I have devoted our entire attention to our two daughters and the farming activities at Nishna. There have been short interludes of other activities that we feel are a part of every successful community.

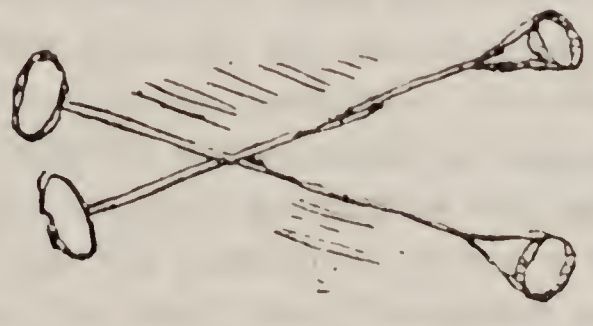
On February 26, 1955, we lost Lola's father, T. M. Brazelton, Uncle Tom as he had come to be known to his relatives and friends. His life work had been agricultural pursuits in Southwest Iowa.

If it could be said that Uncle Tom had a hobby, it was young men. He liked to start them up in the farming business, advise and encourage them to succeed. If the going got rough, his favorite remark was "Au shockins, forget it and get to trotin'." Finance intrigued him as much as agriculture. Many an attorney who attempted to match wits with him in respect to the legal intricacies of the law came out second best in the hassel, much to his amusement. Always he had confidence in his ability and the ability of those he trusted, to succeed.

Lola's mother, Rose Gipe Brazelton is reasonably hale and hearty at seventy-eight. Since Uncle Tom's death she has traveled rather widely with relatives and friends. Like her husband, her interest has been centered in her farms and finance. To her, contracts and legal documents are more intriguing than a good novel. If she has a hobby, it might be her house plants, the contents of her sewing basket or the everyday events of her life and the lives of her neighbors.

In 1957 we moved our farm business headquarters into a new building across the road from our farm home, holding our official opening on April 6th. We expanded the operation to include a limited line of retail merchandising, and space for the Mills County office of Production Credit. The distance from residence to business house is not much more than one hundred yards but the improvement it made in our operational technique was so great that it seemed more like we had moved into a different line of business in a totally new country.

The management at Nishna has watched and played a small part in the progress of this nation from the time when Prairie Schooners parked for the night in our barn yard to the present day with jet planes breaking the sound barrier above our heads. We have wept with our neighbors over the casualty lists of four wars and the action in Korea. We have heard the chuckle of stagecoach wheels blend into the rumble of railroad engines, motor buses and planes. We have stored our surreys with the fringe on top to make room for tractors and automobiles. We have watched our dirt roads turn to concrete and small town sites become industrial centers. We have been so long in the same place that even our children seem to feel themselves as much a part of the past as they do of the present and the future. We are not afraid of high taxes, wars, sacrifices, hard labor, drought, floods, joys, sorrows, gaiety, loneliness, physical handicaps, life and death itself, because during one hundred and four years we have learned to walk hand in hand with all of these things. We believe firmly that there will be more chapters to the story of Nishna.



In 1953 we featured the old White Cloud Mill on the cover of Wearin's Holiday Life. In the first place the pioneer industrial enterprise was in operation on the Nishna when my Grandfather Otha Wearin, arrived in Mills County, Iowa in 1854. The settlement that surrounded it was of some consequence, including a store and a postoffice, the only trading center in the county, east of Coonville (Glenwood). It was to White Cloud Mill, some four miles down the river, that Grandfather and his brothers, Josiah, Andrew and Harry drove with teams and wagon loads of wheat and corn to be ground into flour and meal for their families. When the Nishna was straightened all dams were required to be removed from the stream. Its source of power gone, the old mill fell into financial difficulties and was sold, the machinery junked and the building wrecked. A sentimental and historic land mark was thus lost forever. It would have made a beautiful recreation and scout camp if we, the people, of Mills County had possessed the foresight to preserve it.

Part II

A Glimpes of Two Decades

Introduction

During the past twenty years the story of Nishna has been told in considerable detail through the pages of our annual Christmas booklet, "Wearin's Holiday Life." To reprint the contents in full, would make this little volume too long. It is to be hoped that the following highlights from that source will serve to portray the tempo of life at Nishna and bring the story of the same family, on the same Iowa farm for over a century, up to date. The articles have not been arranged entirely in chronological order, according to dates.

Country Life

1947

Another year of country living has not dulled its interest or dimmed its joys for the Wearins. We have had soil in our hands for so many generations it won't wash off. It is evident that our daughters are running true to form.

We believe in attractive farmsteads, rural entertainment and rural schools that preserve a love and understanding of the soil. Large concentrations of people, young or old, have a tendency to create social, economic and health problems that cannot exist in rural atmosphere. Socialism and other idealogies can flourish in city streets only to wane and die in the country. The plain countryman has other and more wholesome things to occupy his mind. There's a fence to fix, stock to feed, crops to plant and till, gardens to hoe, eggs to gather and best of all an ever-changing scene of green and growing things.

A child who loafs in the streets seldom gets an inspiration from what he sees but let him go after the cows and he comes home harboring the sound of rustling corn, seeing again the sight of a new born calf and holding in his heart the song of a meadowlark. That child can't help but be more wholesome and more inspired than he would be with the odor of gas fumes in his nostrils and the clang of a street car ringing in his ears at night. There are those who say that life begins at forty, now there are some who say it begins at eighty, but for a countryman it begins at birth.

Playtime and
the Playhouse

A Merry Christmas

1942

I am sending you a special Christmas greeting this season because I missed last year's edition of Wearin's Holiday Life by four days. I am glad I preceeded gas rationing, I might have been even later this year.

This note is to let you know I like Nishna very much indeed. It's a good thing I do or my old man would be sore. He's cranky enough as it is. Mother has been reasonably nice to me, except that she will wipe my nose; Grandmother Wearin entertains me by the hour. If she eases up a little I squeal at her. I adore my sister except when she takes things away from me. Of late I have been "bopping" her for it with both fists. Dad is the funniest looking old codger I ever saw. I have to laugh every time I see him. He's the only man around this Hacienda but just between us girls, we're going to put up with him as long as the bank will honor his checks. Sorry I haven't time for more, I must get my rest as I am recovering from chicken pox and a dickens of a cold. See you next Christmas.

Rebecca Joe Wearin.

Girls, a Dog
and Sunshine

Beauty Is As Beauty Does

Martha is growing up. She started to school this fall. She has worn her first long party dress. She tramps the farm every minute she is home with her dad, calls the cattle to their salt, milks a cow in the evening, rides horseback on her pony or her favorite sorrel horse appropriately named Poky. She is old enough now that Christmas means a lot to her as to the rest of her family. If she could analyze world affairs at the moment she would probably say they are in a "pickle of a jam" but even so she hopes every one has as happy a Christmas as possible.

In Party Dress
or Overalls

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A YOUNG LADY AT NISHNA

Rebecca is a lively little girl. She runs everywhere, rides her two hobby horses at top speed and loves her dolls. Outside of being a potential equestrian she bids fair to be the home body and householder of the Wearin girls. Her conversation is limited but effective and determined. She loves to frown and shout "Shut de door" or in her most pleasant and smiling manner announce "Suppe's ready" at the beginning of every meal. Of course she wishes you a "Merry Christmas" and a good "suppe" that day.

She calls herself "Beck" and upon occasions "Becka" Joe Wearin. The three dogs of the household are her constant companions with some favoritism extended to Bobana. She disciplines them rather severely but they are gracious about it. After all this is their second effort at helping raise a baby, so it's "get out of the way dogs," here comes a gal and her wagon.

Country Childhood

1946

Play time at Nishna means ponies, dogs, tepees and lots of space with no keep off the grass signs. We think the country is the finest place in the world to raise children. They see and learn to know life in a complete and wholesome way. It has always seemed to us that children of the farm and small towns who know the feel of grass beneath their feet and the blue of the sky overhead; who are awakened by the songs of birds and lulled to sleep by the soft-footed sounds of the country night, will be basic in our topsy-turvy world. If anyone can save it, they can.

Play time at Nishna means grand times at Nishna for Rebecca, Martha and their friends, Mary Wearin, Kenneth Bruce and Dan Phelps who live up and down the lane a step or two, and other relatives and friends who visit them from time to time.

Rebecca and Twinkle

Marie and Martha Wearin
holding Whizzer

Stormy with Rebecca UP

From a Country Window

1949

Martha has been quite active this year in "4-H" work. Her club, the Hastings Hustlers, won a nice group of ribbons at the county fair. In poultry club she brought home a "blue" to add to her collection.

We erected a new double crib this year out of Ozark Oak. It is 64 feet long with a 12 foot driveway, creosoted pole construction set in concrete.

Lola is quite unhappy because a localized run of grasshoppers almost wrecked our garden this year. The shelves in the store room would have been a bit bare had it not been for early peas, sweet corn from Grandfather Brazelton's and some tomatoes and cucumbers we purchased of local growers.

We limed 55 acres of ground this year on the eighty east and south of the big house. The east side of it has never produced as well as the west side since it was first broken out of prairie sod in the "50's." A seeding of alfalfa the year before caught beautifully but by the time the oats had been combined the new seeding was beginning to turn yellow. Tests indicated the soil had a deficiency of about four tons of lime to the acre. We put on two tons to the acre and plowed it under along with what remained of the alfalfa. We had also grazed a few cattle on it after harvest. This year it produced the best crop of corn in history. It will go back to alfalfa again in the spring.

An unusually wet spring resulted in a very short crop on the east side of the river this season, about 25% of last year. When added to the production of the previous season, however, it makes a reasonably good average.

Mr. Martin Cussack, who has been with us since 1946, still resides at Nishna. He makes his home in the little house on the lawn that we built to live in while the "brick" was being constructed the summer of 1925 following the fire that destroyed our old home the day after Christmas in 1924. He helps care for the lawns, cuts wood for the fireplaces, keeps the fence rows and barn lots clear of weeds, looks after the pets and poultry while we are away and performs innumerable other tasks. He was away for a couple of months this spring and we were lost without him. He is part and parcel of our organization. He is well read, a philosopher who is a worthy opponent of any intellect and possesses a sense of humor that delights us all.

Cattle feeding operations at Nishna this year have been reasonably successful in spite of high prices that have fluctuated rather badly at times, threatening our narrow margins.

Rebecca, Martha, Mary, Jane & Alberta Young

Becky, Martha, Mary and Jane Wearin and Alberta Young.

Girls On Horseback

1949

There has been about the usual activity at the stable this year with a few high-lights. Goldie, our palomino; Rainbow, a daughter of Poky; and Stormy, our steel-grey shetland went to Corning this summer for a few lessons at the hands of expert horse trainers. They returned with dispositions improved but still in the rough.

Rebecca was just making progress in teaching Stormy to stand on a box, to jump the hurdle and teeter-totter with Sugar, his mother, when he suffered a strange and terrible accident. We found him in the pasture one morning with his right hind leg broken just above the hock. The case looked hopeless. The veterinarian shook his head and strongly recommended "ending it all" but the pleading of the family and considerable weak-heartedness on the part of the "old man" himself, won out. We brought him to the house on the stone-boat, gave him a "knockout" pill and together the "Vet" and I made an effort to set the bone. Uncertain as to our success, we put a cast on the leg, tied the little fellow in a box stall and began the long, slow experiment. He stood there for eight weeks and to my knowledge never laid down. At the end of the

stretch, with much foreboding we removed the cast—and he walked gingerly out into the lot. Now he runs and frolics with his mother, as good as ever, except when carrying a heavy load he favors the right leg just a trifle.

There was one fatal accident among the pets this year that wrung our hearts. Last winter the John Taylors gave us one of the cutest little tan and white rat terrier puppies we ever owned. His tail arched over his back in a perpetual curl, his ears stood up as if taped and he had the capacity of learning almost any trick in an evening or two. His ever ready playfulness endeared him to everyone. Early one morning he was run down by a speeding car on the highway in front of the house and killed instantly. We have sought in vain to duplicate him. Dogs, like humans, are individuals and seldom do you find two alike. Little Ginger will always be a part of the memories of Nishna.

Rebecca
in Christmas cowhand
outfit ready for a day
in the open.

Across the Threshold

1956

We always feel honored because of the many people who come to call, sometimes to dine, to spend the night or stay longer at Nishna.

One of the high-lights of our year's entertaining was when Dorothy Watkins of Barry, S. Wales, England, came all the way from Toronto, Canada, to visit us. Dorothy is a member of the Watkins family with whom I spent a fortnight on their farm, The Park, near Abergavenny, England, in 1927. It was a joy to renew our acquaintance and for us to try in a small way to repay the hospitality she and all the members of her household extended to me.

Governor-elect Herschel Loveless and Roland Reko called at Nishna a few days after the primary election and had lunch with us. We were honored to be consulted in planning the strategy of what proved to be his successful campaign.

My friend of long standing, former Governor, Dan Turner of Corning and William Loper, spent a morning with me in September. Dan was Governor of Iowa during my second term in the Legislature. He was a fine executive; we have always had much in common.

The late R. M. "Spike" Evans, democrat candidate for United States Senator made two stops at Nishna to discuss the campaign and to reminiscence a bit about the days we spent together in Washington, D. C. We lost a fine friend, and the nation lost an able statesman when he died so suddenly in November.

Lester Gillette, former democrat candidate for Governor of Iowa made a brief stop at Nishna. We have long been associated together in politics and Production Credit.

Rev. and Mrs. J. R. Perkins spent two days with us in July, Uncle Jake, who is a widely known author, is my advisor in journalistic matters.

We had the pleasure of entertaining in our home for one delightful evening, Major Mark Brown, co-author of "The Frontier Years" and "Before Barbed Wire."

Left to right, Otha, Clarence Ellsworth and Rev. J. R. Perkins at Nishna.

We especially enjoyed the visits made in our home by Rev. and Mrs. Albert Whiley of French Cameron, West Africa, during the portion of their leave that they spent in Iowa. Mrs. Whiley is our cousin, Helen Donner. Their Mission and Hospital on the dark continent, are attracting world wide attention.

We have had the pleasure of entertaining many groups in our garage, that has become sort of a fun house. Martha staged a dance, Beck a slumber party, the family a neighborhood Fourth of July picnic in the rain and the Democrat Women's Club, a county wide meeting addressed by George Eischied, candidate for State Auditor and Edward Fitzgerald, candidate for State Attorney General.

Art Sanford of Sioux City, State Chairman of the drive to raise funds for Adlai Stevenson, presided over a Seventh Congressional District meeting for that purpose at Nishna. There were meetings of the Hastings Hustlers 4-H club and Clarinda Production Credit Associations.

Among those we seldom have the pleasure of seeing were Mona Graham Jensen of California, the Thomas H. Lindleys, Lola's Indiana and Ohio relatives, Marjorie Lippitt, who spent four days with us, her parents, Mr. and Mrs. C. L. Lippitt, Kearney, Nebr.; Steve Matthews and son, Chicago; the George Havens family and Mr. and Mrs. Robert E. O'Brien (former Secretary of State) all of Des Moines; John L. Jensen, democrat candidate for Congress; Kay Smith of Lankerton, England; Felix Summers of Minneapolis; Donald Anderson of Ames, Ia.; Barbara Schweser of Fremont, Nebraska (Martha's room-mate at Grinnell); Mattie Phelps, Peoria, Ill.; Dr. and Mrs. W. D. Peterson, Exira; Dr. and Mrs. Abbott Dean of Council Bluffs.

Clarence Ellsworth, western artist from Los Angeles, was with us a few weeks this summer while conducting an exhibition of his work at the Fremont Centennial in his native state of Nebraska. He put the finishing touches on two paintings while he was here. Many of our friends are coming to know Mr. Ellsworth and to enjoy his visits as much as we do.

We wish we had the space to go into detail about all of our close neighbors and friends who stop to call during the year. All in all, we managed to keep Nishna dusted off for the season. Come and see us. We will make room for you.

Dorothy Watkins of Barry, England and Otha inspect Becky's Model T.

The Poet Of The Rockies At Nishna

Jim Whilt of Kalispell, Montana, Poet of the Rockies and for years, chief guide in Glacier National Park, has been a close friend of our family and often a guest in our home since 1926.

On one of his visits he wrote the following poem about the members of the household and the farm.

ONE DEAR SPOT

When the sun of summer shines
And its rays pour down so hot,
I have a kind of longing in my heart
For one dear spot,
It is down beside a river
Where the birds sing sweet and low
By the lazy flowing Nishna
At the farm of Uncle Joe.

I can see his wondrous cornfields
As they rustle in the breeze.
I can hear the quail's shrill whistle
Where he sits among the trees.
I can see his herd of Guernseys
When the West is all aglow,
Coming to the sheds for milking
At the farm of Uncle Joe.

There the fat and lazy porkers
In the shade so cool and deep
Never seem to even worry,
All they do is eat and sleep.
I can hear the bees a-buzzing
As they're flying to and fro,
Getting honey from the clover
On the farm of Uncle Joe.

Aunt Mary is in the farm house
With its rooms so long and wide
They seem to be a-beckoning,
Wanting you to come inside
Where the table's heaped with goodies
And her face is all aglow.
'Tis the dearest place I know,
That old farm of Uncle Joe.

James W. Whilt.

Heard at Our House

1957

January 2nd, 1957, all members of the family started another active winter. Lola and I always start the New Year by celebrating our wedding anniversary, this time, the 25th. Martha returned to Grinnell to complete her sophomore year. Becky launched the preparation of her second fifty-page term paper of the season for a high school sophomore course in World History.

As for me, the process of completing the farm office across the road from the house again occupied all of my time.

The season's improvements on the residence included redecorating the northeast bedroom for Becky, installing a new hot water boiler, and a north porch enclosure. The pros and cons of the latter alteration had been discussed for at least fifteen years.

Lola, Becky and Don Bruce made a hurried trip to our Ozark cabin in May. They arranged for the continued storage of our boat, mowed the lawn, made minor repairs, supervised the grading of our road and were home again on the fourth day.

Turmoil reigned supreme the first week of June as all hands prepared for Martha's departure for Europe. On June 7th one of the Fords, not the Model T, rolled out of the drive loaded with all three of my gals and Barbara Schweser, headed for Quebec, Canada. Martha and Barbara, her roommate in Grinnell, sailed from that port on June 12th with other student members of a Wells Tour.

Lola and Becky continued on by car to Niagara Falls, Fort Ticonderoga, Detroit, Greenfield Village, Bellevue, Iowa and Ames, Iowa. Becky stopped off at the latter point for three days to attend the Girls' State 4-H Convention. She was selected to deliver The Country Girl's Creed at the opening session of 1,600 delegates.

Lola stopped at Des Moines to attend a meeting of the Directors of "The Iowa Society for Preservation of Historical Landmarks." Later in the year she was reelected State Vice-President of the organization.

My cousin, Hazel Donner, now Mrs. Clyde Pittman of San Francisco, California, spent four "never to be forgotten" days at Nishna in June. Hazel has had a colorful career of service and achievement as a teacher, and later, during World War II and the Korean trouble, as a USO Supervisor. She served on the Pacific Coast, in Hawaii and on Kwalpalein.

On July 4th, we had the pleasure of entertaining Governor and Mrs. Herschel Loveless at a six o'clock dinner. We were joined in the party by Mr. and Mrs. Richard Hyde and Mr. and Mrs. Don Bruce. The Governor was enroute to deliver the Independence Day address at the Dutch Gun Club celebration held in Malvern, Iowa.

Becky and her mother were deeply embroiled in 4-H work through July and until after the County Fair in early August. Becky's ginger cookies made it to the State Fair. She was top poultry judge in the county. She was a member of the Mills County team that judged at the Iowa State Fair and won the State championship. She was elected Vice-President of Mills County Girls' 4-H Clubs.

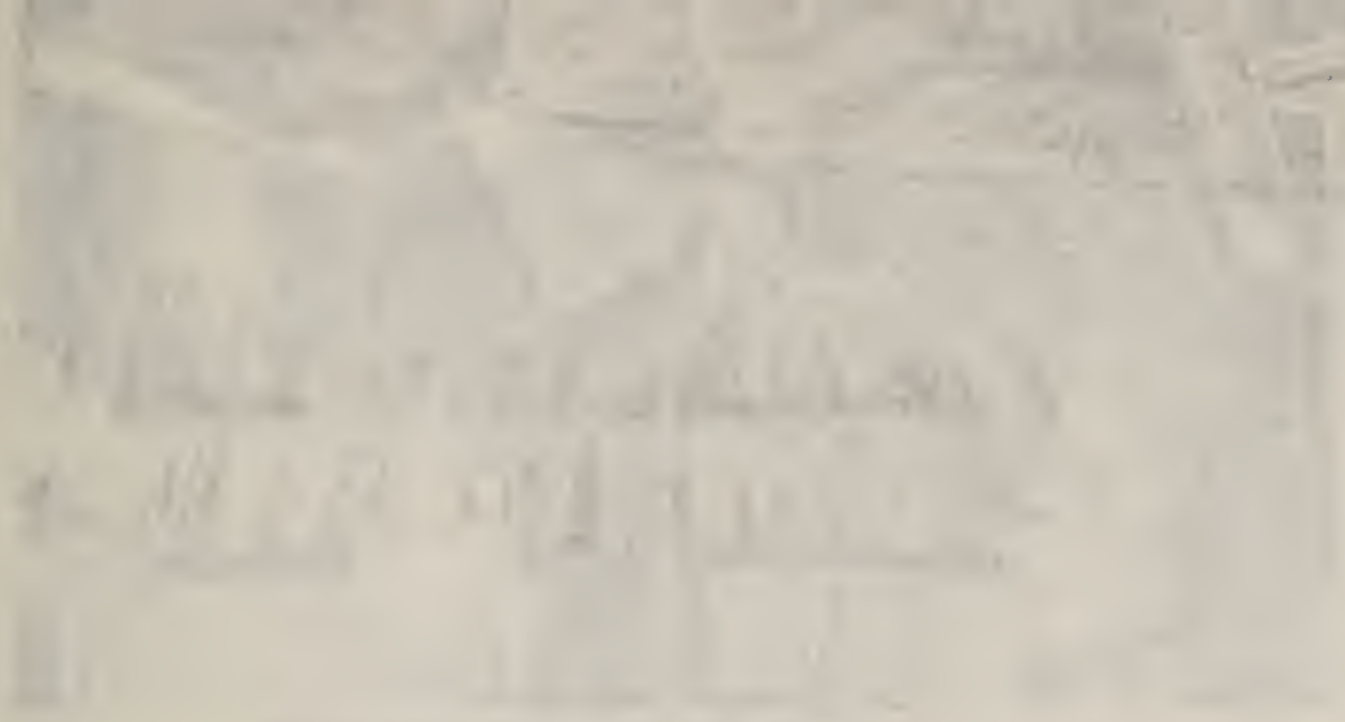
September 2nd was an exciting day at Nishna, as Martha returned from her three month's sojourn abroad. She and her 16 traveling companions under the leadership of Dr. Ruff of Redlands, California visited England, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Monoco and France. On July 30th Martha and Barbara left the organized tour at Paris to visit a friend of mine, Mr. Clifford Folger, U. S. Ambassador in Brussels, Belgium. From the latter point they proceeded on their own to Holland for a few days, thence to England where they headquartered in London for the month of August. They made a one day trip to old Battle, England, at the outskirts of which the historic battle of Hastings was fought in 1066.

They made short trips to Scotland and Ireland. They had three days with my friends, the Watkins family in Wales, having the thrill of spending two nights in an English farm home erected in 1530 belonging to Mr. and Mrs. John Heath (Mrs. Heath was the former Elsie Watkins). They enjoyed a day on the farm of Mr. and Mrs. David Watkins, where I resided in the summer of 1927. Three interesting Heath sons took the girls on a thrilling trip through the Wye Valley that included a boat trip on the river. The girls deeply appreciated the gracious hospitality extended to them at both farms and the opportunity to get a close look at English agriculture. While they were in London they were also assisted and entertained by Dorothy, Annie and Eunice Watkins.

The experience Martha gained in public relations as outstanding 4-H girl of Mills County and as State Vice-President of Girls' 4-H Clubs of Iowa was a great help to her in foreign travel.

Martha and Barbara were met in New York by Barbara's father, Mr. Fred Schweser and his son. They made the trip home from that point by car. Martha was with us for ten days before returning for her junior year at Grinnell. Becky began her junior year in Malvern High on September 1st.

Becky, Lola & Otha in the library.



Grandma Brazelton spent most of June, in company with relatives, touring the Eastern Seaboard States and parts of Canada. She enjoyed the trip thoroughly and returned with interesting stories and some lovely gifts for her family.

We are sorry to report that she had a bad fall about mid-September. She damaged a vertebrae that will require some good care for a long time. She spent two months in the Red Oak hospital and is making a nice recovery.

* * *

Among friends from a distance who called on us during the summer were Rear Admiral and Mrs. Allen Chantry of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Both the Admiral and his wife are native Mills County people. Mr. Chantry had recently undergone successful eye surgery and wanted to be of service to me in my own visual problems.

Another friend of long standing, Mrs. Don Murphy, wife of the Editor of Wallaces' Farmer, stopped to talk to Lola about the work of the Extension Service and see the Iowa crafts in our gift shop. A few weeks later to our amazement, Mrs. Murphy notified Lola that she had been named a Master Homemaker in Iowa by Wallaces' Farmer.

Martha at the rail of the Arosa Sun enroute to England

The Family Circle

1958

All members of our family spent the summer of 1958 at home. The girls had some short trips to vary the routine. Becky left after school was out to attend a short course in Drama, Radio and Television speaking at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln. After completing that work, she left immediately to spend four days at the 4-H camp, Madrid, Iowa. Later in the summer she attended a rural Leadership session at the same camp. At the latter she was elected one of the two Senators, who will act as counselors in 1959.

In the fall of 1957 the family council began considering the possibility of Becky entering college at the end of her junior year in high school. The final decision was made during Martha's spring vacation. Becky selected Cornell at Mt. Vernon, Iowa and entered the freshman class there in September. At mid-year she is getting along beautifully.

Martha
in the gown she
wore at Ak-Sar-Ben
Coronation

Becky at the 4-H State
Convention at Ames

Becky completed several home furnishing projects in 4-H that won blue ribbons at the County Fair and were exhibited at the State Fair in Des Moines.

In the spring Martha was named by the Iowa Citizenship Committee as one of a group of college students to spend a week in Washington, D. C. as aids to Congressmen. Martha was assigned to the office of Congressman Merwin Coad of Iowa. She thoroughly enjoyed her experience in practical politics in government.

Also, in the spring Martha received confidential notice that she had been selected as one of sixteen countesses to reign at the Coronation of the King and Queen of Ak-Sar-Ben in Omaha, Nebraska on the 16th, 17th & 18th of October. The scene is the colorful opening of the social season in that nearby city.

On October 20th Martha appeared before an interviewing committee at Ames, Iowa where she was named as one of Iowa's International Farm Exchange students for 1959. This means that she will spend six months in Europe next summer, residing in the farm homes of European families to study their methods of farming and rural life. She expects to receive an assignment before the first of the year.

Lola and Martha made a hurried trip to the Ozarks in June, mowed the lawn at the cabin, made some minor repairs and arranged to have our road to the property rebuilt. In mid-summer, she drove to the Nebraska farm, had a look at the Pioneer Village at Minden and spent the night with our cousins, the Lippetts at Kearney. Our western artist friend, Clarence Ellsworth, arrived in mid-August and remained with us until mid-September.

Grandmother Brazelton has completely recovered from her fall of a year ago. She has had a pleasant year, enjoyed her trip to a family reunion in Indiana as well as various points of interest in that state and Michigan.

Frances Harmon was a great help to us at the house this spring and summer. We were quite unhappy when she had to leave us early in September. We are still enjoying the tomato juice she processed.

Our neighborhood was saddened this summer by the loss of one of its prominent senior members; our relative, Otha Hyde. His record of good Americanism and an ever-ready helping hand will always be part of the traditions of this community.

During the year we lost another relative and friend, Herb Benton of Mesa, Arizona. His kindness and loyal friendship will always be enshrined in the memory of all those who knew him.

Mr. and Mrs. Clyde Pittman (Hazel Donner) of San Francisco, California made it to Nishna for a one night stand last fall. It was the first time we had met Clyde but we were all old friends within an hour. He is a collector and hobbyist, so conversation moved at a fast clip every moment of his and Hazel's short visit. They are now our west coast representatives in the antique and art business.

Our dogs, Gee-gee, Sparky and Sandy had a wonderful year. Sandy, the newest member of the group is proving to be an excellent watch-dog.

Drawn by Felix Summers from a photograph of a steam threshing machine at Nishna.

Field Notes

1947

We employed two bulldozers to clear some scattered timber on the east side of the Nishnabotna this spring and prepare the land for cultivation, even to plowing and disking with the heavy machinery.

* * *

Our farming season opened up beautifully but soon encountered the heaviest rains in years. The Nishna overflowed its banks at planting time and flooded the entire valley taking with it both the river and Indian Creek bridges between our place and Hastings. We harvested five hundred bushels of wheat and three wagon loads of soft unmatured corn on our entire place east of the river. Crops on the west side were very short. Our feeding operations including cattle and hogs were curtailed accordingly.

* * *

We experimented with four varieties of oats this year, planted the same day, in the same field. We were highly pleased with the manner in which the Clinton's stood up and yielded.

* * *

The floods cleaned out all of our east-west fences on the first bottom. The deposit of silt was the heaviest I have ever noted.

The bluegrass sod on the first bottom was covered in places with twelve to sixteen inches of mud. I think it will come through eventually.

* * *

Our stable notes are brief this year. U. S. Highway No. 34 has been detoured past our house so the children have been unable to do much riding. Even so we have added two Shetlands to our remuda, a little white mare named Sugar and her fiery two-year-old gray son, called Stormy. Our harness horse, Nishna Bell was sold to the Allen Stables northwest of Glenwood.

Around the Farm

1957

The cattle feeding program at Nishna was a little larger than usual in 1957 but followed the same pattern. Our heavy cattle were Holstein steers ("in"-weight about 700 lbs.), our light cattle were heifers ("in"-weight about 375 lbs.). John Taylor raised the hogs on the farm and Keith Bruce fattened them.

* * *

Our wheat yield was down but the corn crop was good. Keith put fifty-five acres of the latter into trench silos. We covered them with black plastic. The latter part of June and July were hot and dry but the rains came in time to save the corn.

Oats planted as a nurse crop for alfalfa were grazed by cattle being fed in the fields. The excessive heat in July was too much for some spring planted legumes. They were re-seeded in August with good results. About sixty acres received an application of two tons of lime per acre, after the ground had been plowed. It was then disked in and the seed bed prepared.

* * *

Our experiments with new crops and methods have continued as usual. We have tried some applications of calphos, a natural, marine residue of phosphate and trace minerals. We have observed no increase in crop yields but are having grains produced, with and without it, analyzed for comparative protein and mineral content. I am opposed to commercial fertilizers and poison sprays. Agricultural limestone and rock or marine residue phosphates do not belong in the above categories. They are natural products that when applied properly do not disturb the balance of nature. Our program of livestock and organic farming has maintained our farm as one of the top grain producers in the area.

* * *

We have several experimental plots of Iowa Lespedeza located on various types of soil. Since it is an annual, our experiment will not be complete until next spring when we will learn if it has reseeded itself. The old Korean variety will not always do so, this far north. If the new Iowa type will reseed, it will be a useful rotation legume for those of us who feed livestock in the fields, because it eliminates the problem of bloat that often results in heavy losses when grazing other types of clovers.

* * *

The results of our experiment with Zoysia grass as a lawn covering were not as earth shaking as the advertisements led us to expect. On the contrary, my cousin, Henry Washburn, who owns adjoining land, has an excellent bed of it on his lawn. I think our failure was due to insufficient irrigation during extremely hot periods.

The Alvin Paul family has produced excellent crops on the Nebraska farm this season with the aid of our irrigation well. We are still searching for a more economical power unit for the pump than the automobile engine we have been using.

* * *

Improvements have been limited this year to an enclosed porch for Keith and Mary Bruce, a kitchen and porch remodeling project on the farm home occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Louis Ranne, and also a septic tank and water system at the John Taylor home plus a considerable amount of outside painting.

* * *

Fruit tree and ornamental plantings were limited in expectation of another dry year. The marked improvement in the appearance of John and Darlene Taylor's lawn, thanks to their care of native tree plantings, makes us realize the importance of farm home landscaping.

* * *

Our pond project has progressed very little during the past year. I am confident that a "rainy" season will fill it. We have "put down" a well at the southeast corner and installed a windmill in an effort to supplement our supply of surface water and rainfall.

* * *

Nishna Vale Farm can still boast of one of the largest horse populations in the county. The Bruces and Wearins could round up eight saddle horses (one "unbroke"), two work horses and four Shetland ponies.

* * *

Our two rat-terrier dogs, "Gee-gee" and Sparky, stand guard over the home place. Sparky, who came to us last fall as a tiny black and white puppy, has added zest to our family circle.

He made life much more interesting for Gee-Gee, who seemed listless and lonely after our loss of Tuffy and Pepper in the spring of 1956. Late in the year, Sandy, a brown and white Shepherd puppy, joined our canine circle.

Gee-Gee, Sparky and Sandy get fed, on the White Cloud Mill Stone, Alice, the cat, observes.

Farm and Country News

1958

We have had a fine crop year except for one hail storm that may have cut our corn yield as much as thirty per cent in some areas.

* * *

Our feeding program has progressed as usual with the greater portion of our production being heifers purchased in Montana. Our Holstein steers came from Idaho. Late in the summer we brought in some 750-850 lb. Oklahoma steers for a short feed. They went to market before the Holidays.

* * *

Our pond experiment is working out nicely. The heavy rains this summer plus continuous operation of the well with a windmill have kept it full almost to overflowing throughout the summer.

1951914

* * *

Construction has been at a standstill all summer because of a lack of carpenters. In October, we managed to get a crew organized and install over-head bins in the double crib on the north farm that Keith Bruce operates.

We have also managed to get three buildings re-roofed, thanks to the help of John Taylor, who operates the farm east of the river and Charlie Hall of Hastings.

* * *

We are pleased that the community and surrounding areas helped us enjoy the farm office during the year. We have been hosts to 4-H clubs, 4-H Achievement shows, Clarinda Production Credit Board of Directors, Mills County Board of Education, Officers and Directors of the Iowa Association for the Preservation of Historic Landmarks, political meetings and many other groups.

During the year Horace Paul Richardson improved our facilities by installing a high-fidelity record player and public address system with separately controlled speakers in various parts of the building.

Our Antique, Craft and Gift Shop has added many new lines of beautiful and unusual merchandise that can normally be found only in the larger cities and at resort areas. Our pride and joy this year are two sterling silver souvenir spoons, one having our home enameled in colors in the bowl, the other portraying the old Mills County Court House in the same manner.

Our farm office has been increasingly satisfying to us during the past year. We marvel now at how we managed without it. Mrs. Arlene Anderson is still with us as secretary, bookkeeper and gift shop manager.

Mr. Louis Ranne has kept our lawns, roadways and nearby lots in beautiful condition this summer. Life for us and our friends at Nishna would have been far less attractive without his help.

We have continued the program of terracing, pond construction and grassed waterways on the Brazelton land and our own. We think soil and water conservation are important factors in successful farming and community improvement.

Notes of a Plain Countryman

1958

Our fruit crop was very short this year, due we think, to late frosts.

* * *

We are experimenting with English Box Hedge in front of the farm office. We think it is the loveliest of all hedging plants but normally it doesn't do too well this far north.

This spring we added almonds to our experiments with nut trees. Our chestnuts, butternuts, pecans and English Walnuts are all growing but did not bear this year. Even our native black walnuts did not produce heavily so the season must not have been right. It is possible, of course, that they were caught at the height of their blossom period by the drift from some aerial spraying.

* * *

Early this spring, I received a box of filberts, native to the northwest portion of the United States, from my father's cousin, Milan J. Wearin, Rt.-13880, Springfield, Oregon. We were both of the opinion that they would grow in this area. I planted and watered them religiously but without results. I intend to try again next season.

North Lawn
at Nishna

Our tulip tree that many predicted would not grow here has come through four winters and is about twelve feet high. It should bloom next year.

* * *

Our experiments with the new variety of Iowa lespadeza are working out nicely on the hills. Our experimental plot here on the second bottom also reseeded itself, even though we kept it clipped.

* * *

We lost Sugar, our oldest Shetland pony, this summer.

Our vegetable garden was reasonably successful this year, considering the fact that June was a very dry month. The early vegetables were excellent. Our sweet corn and tomatoes were superb.

For several years our local Women's Club has sponsored the planting of flowering shrubs. This year they selected the Rose of Sharon and made a quantity purchase for all the members. Lola's are doing nicely. They gave us a few blossoms this first season.

Our Hybrid Tea roses have bloomed prolifically this summer because of adequate moisture.

I can't understand why, with all of our labor-saving devices, we seem to get busier each season. Perhaps it is because our interests cover a wider field than they did in the old days.

South Lawn
at Nishna

The Farm Beautiful

1941

We belong to the group that believe a farm should be landscaped differently than a city property. It should have an atmosphere that is distinctly rural, neat and charming in its simplicity. We do not rule out the formal garden for country people but we believe the use of it should be handled judiciously to say the least.

A farm can be just as lovely and just as attractive as any city dwelling. Furthermore, it is not necessary to spend large sums of money. For example, we have built a good many rods of board fences out of junk that is sometimes permitted to clutter up the place. A few dollars worth of white paint and some elbow grease in spare moments has made the product of our labors attractive additions to the property. Even lime whitewash can be used to good advantage.

We think too, many farmers neglect the appearance of their properties. We are not without sin ourselves but we are attempting to get out of the rut. Even a few hours spent in gathering up useless junk out of the yards and lawns is a help. There is some excuse for lack of improvements and paint but none for slovenliness.

We have been extravagant enough to add a new stable for saddle horses. It is not an expensive building. In reality it is little more than a closed shed with a "front porch" but we think it adds to the appearance of the place.

Martha at
the Garden Gate

Wildlife Conservation at Nishna

1949

The Wearins at Nishna have always been vitally interested in wild life and its preservation, especially birds. The settlement of the country has crowded out most of the animals although of recent years an occasional deer has strayed into the area from a private herd liberated in the vicinity of Avoca; and a few colonies of beaver have located along the Nishna. We would like to preserve them and see them increase. We think they have a place in the beauty and scheme of the country. There is too much of a tendency on the part of most Iowans to think that no wild things have a right to live lest they consume a small portion of the product of the land. There are those who think that every penny the soil produces should go to enrich their fortunes. Too often we overlook the contribution wild life makes to the balance of nature.

We have been quite successful with stimulating bird life with the exception of Chinese Ringneck pheasants. We have liberated over one hundred and fifty birds on the farm in the past twenty years but have very few to show for our efforts. We can't decide if something they need is lacking or if the blame should go to poachers whose lust to kill dominates their better judgment.

We have always had a few evergreens around the house at Nishna that offer shelter for songbirds in bad weather and protection against marauding cats. About 1939 we launched an extensive conifer planting program. A Black Hill spruce windbreak was set north of the farm buildings at the home place.

A Scotch pine windbreak was established north of the main house. A large number of specimen trees such as Coster blue spruce, Black Hills blue spruce, pyramidal juniper, bull pine, white pine and red pine were located about the buildings. These plantings are evident in the aerial view used as a cover on our Holiday Life of 1947.

We have noticed a tremendous increase in our song bird population, both summer and winter, since the above conifers became established. For several seasons a number of cardinals have stayed with us all winter, encouraged of course by regular feeding. The robins come early in March and literally fill the Black Hill spruce with their nests. An occasional check has indicated the following guests in large numbers during the season: Cardinal, Robin, Nuthatch, Pine Grosbeak, Turtle Dove, Brown Thrush, Audubon Oriole, Baltimore Oriole, American Goldfinch, Blue Bird, Purple Martin, House Wren, Bluejay, Blackbird, Red-Winged Blackbird, Red Headed Woodpecker, Quail, Meadow Lark, Yellow Hammer, Hairy Woodpecker, Chimney Swift, Barn Swallow, English Sparrow, Flicker, Ruby Throated Hummingbird, Wood Pewee, Northern Raven (Crow), Starling, Hawks, Cowbird, Indigo Bunting, Catbird, Black-Capped Chickadee and a number of varieties of owls.

We have seen a few Mallard and Blue-Winged Teal ducks and a few flights of Canada Geese. The land along the river is posted in order to give what few game birds are left a resting spot, thinking that it may increase the population of the entire area. We will appreciate having the signs respected by everyone. We think sportsmen will profit from the plan.

from the Pantry Shelf

1945

Food and kitchen chemistry seem to have been matters of the utmost importance at Nishna since the very beginning. At least it dates from the time my father took over the culinary department of the family when he was a kid of eighteen. My mother followed him with a flourish of excellence to which he did not pretend. The extent of the table for which they cooked over a long period of years has probably made the family hypersensitive with respect to maintaining an ample larder. When for years the daily routine of a household included cooking an entire ham, peeling a peck of potatoes, baking bread, four or five pies, a batch of cookies and mixing pancake batter in a two gallon crock, the thought of it all just can't filter out of your blood in any one generation.

For the first time in several years we had an ample crop of seedling peaches, not only on the farm but throughout the countryside. The heavy rains made them delicious. We like them fresh for sauce. They were on the table almost every day for a month. Lola canned and froze a considerable quantity, along with her usual supply of beans (except limas), corn, peas, pickles, etc. The carrots, parsnips, peppers, cabbage, cauliflower and head lettuce were splendid. An experiment with celery proved more successful than was anticipated. We doubt the financial soundness of such enterprises but the sense of security and independence they bring to a family has its benefits, especially as reflected in growing children. They should know how to feed themselves from a small plot of land, if necessary. The soundness of such fundamental things is badly needed in an economy that has come to depend too much on profits and sustenance from sources outside their own efforts.

At the Kitchen Table

1950

Many things happen at our kitchen table, even to the entertainment of our dearest friends and some distinguished guests. Uncle Charley Wearin used to say he didn't mind it because "he was born and raised in a kitchen." Our friend, Robt. O'Brian, former Secretary of State, often stops in for a chat and usually finds himself dining in the kitchen.

Mrs. James A. Cowan, Aunt Nelle to the family, spent the week following Thanksgiving with us. We entertained her at the kitchen table. Having her here was like old times. She was a close friend of my father and mother. We went "red hawing," walnuting, fishing and exploring together when I was a youngster. This time we rescued landlocked fish, investigated bird and animal life and reminisced—a little.

The daily mail is worked on the kitchen table. Most of the business is transacted across it. The sanctum of pots and pans greets us first in the morning and we bless it last at night. Lola has been rebuilding the place for years but it is still just the same except for the addition of modern equipment.

To paraphrase one of Father's expressions, the food that has been cooked in it would fill the longest train on the "Q" (Burlington) tracks.

If you come to see us and get fed in the kitchen, don't be offended. You are only following in the footsteps of many others.

Home Butchering

1946

Home butchering, like steam threshers, shucking bees and New Departure cultivators is rapidly fading from the scene of country living. I regret to see it go, perhaps because I do not think people should become so dependent upon others and upon corporation services for the primary needs of their existence.

We have our butchering done at the farm as we have done for ninety years. I must confess the procedure has changed a little. In the old days it was strictly a family or neighborhood project. Eventually an enterprising member of some nearby community equipped himself with a scalding tank, kettles, knives, etc., and loaded them on a horse-drawn wagon, made the rounds from farm to farm, staying all night with his customers, doing the butchering, grinding the sausage and rendering the lard, a task the women of the household surrendered without a whimper of complaint. Later the equipment was moved from wagon to truck. I remember when Wm. "Bill" Trimmer came to our place the first time with the more primitive conveyance. Bill still does our butchering and we cure our own meat. We think it is good for us to know how.

Bill Trimmer wields the knife
on butchering day

Christmas at the Country School

1949

The arrival of the Holiday season at our house is signaled by preparations for the Christmas program at our country school. Not until the children come home with recitations and "parts" to be memorized for plays do we really swing into the spirit of things. There are costumes to be assembled, props to be gathered from time to time and a dozen and one other details to be worked out.

The tempo of activities increases as the coming event approaches. Finally the great day arrives. The last load of necessary equipment is delivered at the school house, mysterious packages, gifts for teacher and last minute decorations for the tree. Supper at home before the program is a dashing affair, sort of "catch as catch can," with everyone shouting hurry, now hurry. Children, fond parents and baskets of popcorn balls and apples are crammed into the car and we are off.

Every household is represented in the audience. Long-legged papas and plump mamas squeeze into seats intended for eight and ten-year olds. There is a hum of Christmas talk and excited whispering youngsters. Suddenly "Teacher" claps her hands for attention; all pupils scurry to their stations behind the curtains, a hush falls over the crowded room as she announces the program is about to begin. Two bumps protrude at the center point of the curtains, the metal rings that support them on number nine wire shriek and behold the stage appears. A tiny primary student in his or her stiffly starched outfit steps forward and in high pitched voice or in almost inaudible tones recites rapidly her welcome recitation to the hushed, attentive audience. The number is followed by applause that is thunderous in the small room and exclamations of "wasn't that sweet"—and really it was.

There is a Christmas song by the school, a play that portrays the holiday spirit, a clever skit in delightfully ridiculous costumes that brings Santa Claus into the lime light, more recitations, perhaps a quartet, a duet, or even a solo. The program ends in a blaze of childish enthusiasm with a song by the school, "Santa Claus is Coming to Town." The admiring audience cannot help but be impressed by the teacher's endless patience and energy as they are pleasantly surprised to see the adaptability of a dozen children who perform ably in at least a half dozen different events to their advantage in later life. A seven year old learns to move readily from a third grade recitation to the part of grandma in long dress and up-swept hair-do with no more hitch than a suppressed giggle.

In a rush the youngsters flock back to their seats and we begin the traditional distribution of a heap of gifts beneath the tree by the President of the School Board. The room becomes a bee hive of excitement, crackling paper, exclamations of joy, excited conversation, laughter, crunching popcorn under the pressure of both teeth, and feet, coupled with flying juice from big, red apples.

The evening is so short, it's over almost before we know it. A troup of tired, happy children with arm-loads of gifts and proud parents go trudging out the door to begin the Christmas vacation.

We feel these country communities are doing a good job in keeping children off the town and city streets, out of smoke filled soda fountains; close to the soil. Last year's intelligence tests given to grade school students indicated that country school children in Mills County out-ranked students in the same grades in larger town schools. We feel that atmosphere, community spirit and rural surroundings have more to do with stimulating intelligence than marble halls and the dust of city streets. And there is a difference between intelligence and education that some modern educators seem to over-look.

Cottonwoods

1944

"Sometimes we are so close to the forest we are unable to see the trees." We do not always appreciate the cottonwood that is native to this region. They are truly the sequoias of the prairies. They tower above the tree line that borders every stream. Rugged, often enormous in circumference, they attain a tremendous height. Even after they have been torn by terrific winds or struck by lightning they continue to grow.

From their magnificent trunks has come much of the framework that has gone into the buildings at Nishna. From their limbs were carved the oxyokes of the pioneers; as saplings they supplied the prod poles and walking sticks of the emigrants; the stocks for the lashes of the skinners' whips that could send half a dozen yoke of oxen up a slope where a man could hardly walk. Truly the cottonwood is one of the hand-maidens of the west. In the fall its silken leaves shine like gold in the autumn sun and later lay like shimmering pools beneath them.

The magnificent specimens that form a courtyard to the northeast of our house were probably set out in the spring of 1856. Wind and lightning have played havoc with them but five of the original nine still stand. There is never a night so still but what you can hear the whisper of their leaves. In a storm their voices reach a crescendo of joy, or perhaps, alarm. Within their shade have played the Indian children of yesteryear and the little folks of today. They have known the wandering bands of deer and sheltered the finest livestock. No tale of the west has ever been told without the song of a cottonwood tree.

Only God Can Make a Tree

1941—(Revised to date).

The droughts of '34 and '36 and the early freeze of 1940 damaged large numbers of our trees and shrubs. We lost one of the large cottonwoods set out by Grandfather Wearin in 1855, its circumference such that two men could scarcely reach around it. All our bearing apple trees and cherries are gone. We have been adding to our little forest each spring with reasonable success. Most of our new trees are evergreens, Scotch pine, white pine, bull pine, red pine, Coster blue spruce, Colorado blue spruce, black hill spruce and arborvitae, both the ordinary variety, golden and dwarf. Most of the tall evergreens have gone into a single-row spruce windbreak north of the barns and yards and a double row pine windbreak north of the dwellings and gardens with a drive between.

In checking over the progress of all trees this fall, we found the following growing nicely on the lawns and in the barn yards:

White Birch (weeping)
White Birch (pyrmidal)
Japanese Flowering Cherry
Choke Cherry
Betchels Flowering Crab
Hopa Crab
Persimmon
Lombardy Poplar
Cottonwood
Red Maple
Ash
Hackberry
Black Walnut
Black Locust
Mountain Ash
Native Elm
Hybrid Elm
Kentucky Coffee
English Walnut
Pecan
Almond
Native Willow (short leaf)
Black Cherry (wild)
Maple (native soft)
Magnolia Nigra
Magnolia Soulangeana
Chinese Elm
Mulberry
Red Bud
Catalpa
Iron Wood
Boxelder
Red Haw
Russian Olive
Chinese Chestnut
Tulip
Scarlet Beach
Washington Hawthorne
Pin Oak
Gingko

CONIFERS (Evergreens)

White Pine
Scotch Pine
Austrian Pine
Bull Pine
Red Pine
Buck Pine (a short leafed pine brought from the Blue Ridge of West Virginia & Maryland).
Black Hills Spruce
Hemlock
Japanese Yew
English Box
Colorado Blue Spruce
Coster Blue Spruce
Red Cedar
Arborvitae
Arborvitae (golden)
Dwarf Mugo Pine
Japanese Juniper
Dwarf
Spreading
Pyramidal (silver green)
Pfitzer juniper (spreading)
Canarde
Hick's Yew

The Red Haw

Iowa's Flowering Tree

Prominent among the memories of my childhood are the trips we made to the woods after frost in the fall to gather red haws. The brilliantly red, spicy little fruit seemed to convey all the tangy flavor of autumn. We used to bring bags full of them to the house and add them to the evening menu in front of the fire place.

My daughters and I still conduct such expeditions in the fall of the year, seeking diligently for the largest, most mellow of the tiny apple-shaped wild fruits.

The trees never attain any great height. They are tough, sprangly and do well in partial shade. The dark green leaves have sharply serated edges. In the spring the cluster-type blossoms fill the woods with mounds of creamy whiteness. In type of flower and size of cluster they bear a strong resemblance to the high-bush cranberry, so widely advertised in nursery catalogues as an ornamental shrub.

The first light frost turns the fruit a brilliant red. Thus the tree is a colorful addition to any planting throughout the entire season as its creamy white blossoms appear early in the spring, the foliage is a rich dark green during the summer season and the edible fruit progresses from a faint touch of red to a brilliant scarlet with the advancing frosts.

The young trees are easily transplanted. Being a hard, tough wood, they grow slowly and I have known them to attain a height of thirty feet or more. They should be more widely used as ornamentals. Iowa could be as famous for her haws as other states are for their dogwood, rhododendrons or holly.

Old Nishna—1884-1924

The End of an Epoch

The death of Mary Jane Wearin on March 6, 1945 marked the end of an epoch in the history of Nishna. Counting man and wife as one, nine more years would have made a century that the house by the river had known but two owners. The tale of the ninety-one years is the story of a bit of Iowa from prairie sod to the farming community of the moment. For the home in which we live it is an intricate pattern of joy and pathos, like a treasured portrait of long ago.

Chronology of Nishna

We feel it is appropriate in this issue to record the following brief chronology of events that have meant so much to one family.

Otha Wearin entered the land of Nishna in the fall of 1854.
Otha Wearin and Martha Wortman married Dec. 23, 1859.
Charles Wearin born Oct. 30, 1860.
Joe Wearin born May 26, 1864.
Henry Wearin born March 6, 1868.
Mary Valeria Wearin born May 2, 1870.
Martha Wortman Wearin died Sept. 30, 1870.
New home erected 1884.
Joe Wearin and Mary Jane Donner married Nov. 14, 1888.
Cyclone destroyed barns and outbuildings, 1898.
Otha Wearin died April 8, 1902.
Otha Donner Wearin born Jan. 10, 1903.
Fire destroyed second residence Dec. 26, 1924.
New home completed Dec. 24, 1925.
Otha D. Wearin elected to Iowa Legislature 1928-1930.
Otha D. Wearin and Lola Irene Brazelton married Jan. 2, 1931.
Cottage residence south of big house completed June, 1932.
Otha D. Wearin elected to United States Congress, 1932-34-36.
Joe Wearin died Oct. 2, 1937.
Martha Jane Wearin born Dec. 31, 1937.
Rebecca Joe Wearin born Dec. 29, 1941.
Mary Jane Wearin died March 6, 1945.

Mary Jane Wearin

"Lest We Forget"

1945

The following article needs little explanation. It was written by Jim Graham, a guest, upon the occasion of the wedding of Mr. and Mrs. Joe Wearin, Nov. 14, 1888:

* * *

The emblematical orange blossoms will always be in demand as long as Cupid, the blind little god, is so sure a marksman. Hymen will never lack devotees as long as man obeys the divine injunction.

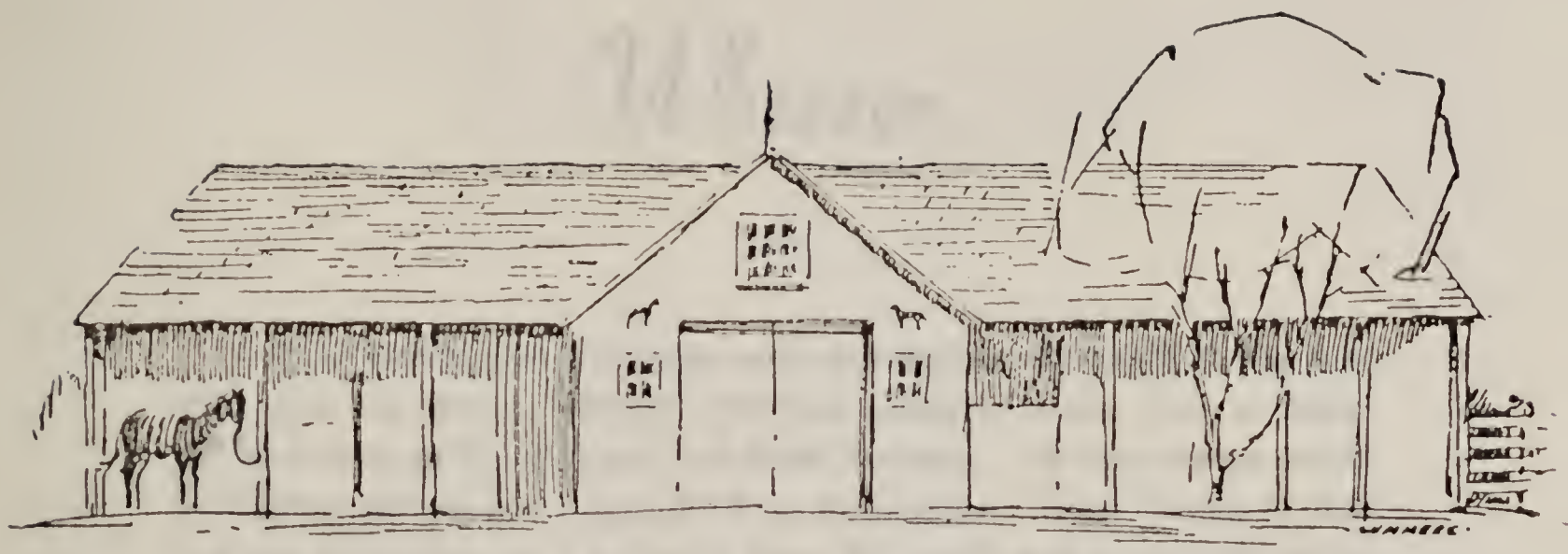
The foregoing assertions were happily illustrated on last Wednesday evening, November 14, at the home of Mr. and Mrs. C. A. Donner, when their daughter, Mary was given in marriage to Mr. Joseph A. Wearin. This event, the most momentous in the life of these young persons, was not wholly unexpected by their many friends. The observing person might have noticed long ago that Cupid's decree was "That these two hearts shall beat as one." At 6 o'clock promptly the deft fingers of Miss Anna Zanders drew from the organ the wedding march. Then came Rev. Mr. Jeffries, followed by bride and groom. The words were said, the covenant made, the benediction offered and they became one in law. Then followed congratulations from their relatives and friends assembled to the number of about eighty.

This young couple need no introduction at our hands. They are a genuine product of Mills county, both having lived in the same community all their lives. Schoolmates, lovers, husband and wife, a delightful trio of steps in their lives. The community in which they live know them well, and if well-wishes can help along their barque on wedded life's (to them) untried sea, then they will have smooth sailing. With them the Rubicon is crossed and Rome an easy victim.

The groom is the second son of Otha Wearin—the genial, whole-souled, unterrified Joe. We all know him. Long may he enjoy the new state he has entered. The bride is one of the accomplished daughters of Mr. and Mrs. C. A. Donner. Accomplished in all those matters which go to make a home brighter and better. Into the new home she brings the sunshine of her smiles, and under the magic touch of her hands burdens will become light and cares fly away. Their boat has been launched on the sea of life under the most favorable circumstances. Long may they sail.

One of the incidents of the evening not to be forgotten was the supper. What a supper that was! Four times did twenty different able-bodied persons charge upon that table and it wasted not away, but like the miraculous loaves and fishes, there was plenty left. Throw away the cook books, when it comes to "pressed chicken and cake" for the culinary artists of the Donner house can distance the writers of cook books. That table would fill a dyspeptic with boiling envy or an epicurean with visions of bliss."—Jim Graham, in a local newspaper Nov., 1888.

Joe Wearin of Nishna (1932)



"Always Speak to a Horse

as you would to a Gentleman"

1944

As they say down south, the horse business has just been rocking along the past year. We have been so short of help, there has been little opportunity to train or work them.

We had three new colts this year. Maxine May (Babe), the thorobred mare presented us with a fine filly by The Bubbler. We think her background is as good as can be found anywhere. Her dam, as has been indicated before, is by War Instigator, an English horse who won $250,000 in England and the Canadian Derby. The Bubbler is by Bubbling Over who won the Kentucky Derby in next to the fastest time in which it was ever run.

Silver, the white mare, has a striking cream colored colt and Betty, the biggest and best of our sorrels has a palomino. Both of the youngsters were sired by Sparkalite's Palomino. Both Betty and Poky, the other sorrel and the Shetland are now expecting by Linne Nelson's Palomino of Essex, Iowa.

We have two fine, coming two year old colts by our old stallion Rex Chief McDonald, and one four year old that we might sell.

The Palomino youngster and Silver's offspring went to the Mills County Fair this fall and made a good showing. Our friend, Tom Caudell came out and helped us break them to lead.

Whizzer

1947

Our household was saddened early this fall by the death of our favorite little rat terrier, Whizzer. He was struck by a car while crossing the road in front of the house and killed instantly. He had always seemed indispensible to our program of rat destruction. Even though he had lost one of his legs in a barbwire fence his heart was ever ready to do battle, and effectively for those who loved him. Our dogs are a part of our family and the loss of one is always a bad blow.

Pets have been part and parcel of our life at Nishna. As a child I had my pony, Twinkle, and a long line of terrier dogs beginning with Bummie until I reached manhood and went in for Police dogs much to my regret. I still say they are beautiful animals.

Lola is as fond of the pet parade at our house as the rest of the family. We seldom have less than three dogs, once we had twelve but that was too many.

At present there is Toughie, an English Shepherd, and Pepper, a daughter of Whizzer. We are on the lookout for another terrier. In the equestrian field there is Poky, the gentle sorrel mare that everyone rides; Twinkle, the brown and white spotted pony; Prince, (brown and white), and the two new additions, Sugar and Stormy.

Canine Comment

1956

I love this little house, because
It offers after dark,
A pause for rest, a rest for paws,
A place to moor my bark.

Tragedy struck our dog family last spring. About a year ago Tuffy suffered a severe injury to his right front foot. A growth developed that was quite troublesome to him. When Mrs. Albert Whiley, R.N. arrived from Africa during the winter we decided to remove the tumor with her capable help. Eventually the foot healed nicely but in March he began to be quite listless. His general physical condition deteriorated rapidly. Two veterinarians examined him. We tried various forms of medication but to no avail. We lost him early in April. He had been my constant companion for thirteen years. After many months, I find myself looking for him at the door, perhaps even calling his name. He was a beautiful dog, a courageous watchman and a friend whose faith in us was boundless. We will remember him always.

Pepper, a little brown rat-terrier we had raised, who belonged to Martha, developed a heart condition during the winter. About a month after Tuffy's death, she became suddenly worse. She lost her sight and many of her other faculties, even though only eleven years old, she did not respond to medication. We thought it only merciful to put her to sleep.

She was an affectionate companion, a tireless hunter and had the distinction of never allowing a housecat to remain alive at Nishna. Like Tuffy, she will always be enshrined in our memory. Becky's dog, Gee-Gee, who had been number three by date of acquisition, had contended vigorously with Tuffy for two years to be master at Nishna, suddenly found himself in the position of the big boss. As with all of us, he discovered that the privileges and responsibilities were not as pleasant as he thought they would be. For weeks he seemed depressed and lonely as most people are at times when they find themselves in a position of authority. The boss's job looks easy until you get it.

Early in September Martha acquired Sparky, a black and white rat-terrier puppy, who came to live with us. He won our hearts the first day. Gee-Gee accepted him with reservations. They are an alert and amusing pair.

1943

The views on our cover this year honor the old Nishna river. We have always loved the Nishnabotna. It is not the beautiful, lazy, wandering stream now it was before some would-be benefactors of the country forced it's straightening. Even so the hand of the Almighty is again at work attempting to correct the errors of men and to hide the hideousness of his handiwork. Many of us can never forget the days of its deep, fish harboring pools, its shell strewn banks and alluring bends where many a flock of wild ducks spent the night. Even cranes and pelicans were frequent visitors in those days. In the spring it was not uncommon for occasional mallards to stop and nest along its shores. There was plenty of shelter then and lots of water. The Indians named it with the latter thought in mind, Nishnabotna meaning, with water deep enough to float a canoe.

Those of us who continue to have our homes near its shores love it for what it used to be and what it may be again in some far distant day, God willing

Round Hole

1943

Round Hole is one of the curious points of interest at Nishna. When Grandfather came here in 1854 it was almost perfectly symetrical with no inlets or outlets being fed by a spring that came out at the foot of a huge ash tree on the east shore. It's bottom and banks were covered with coarse sand and gravel; the water, crystal clear and cool even in the heat of summer. Only the best of swimmers could dive to the bottom in the center. It teemed with sunfish and bull heads and was a constant haven for wild life. Tons of ice were cut there in later years and hauled away in bobsleds and wagons to be stored for summer use. All the neighborhood young people flocked to its banks as soon as the first hard freeze brought on the skating season to rollick over its invariably smooth surface.

The passing of time has altered Round Hole's symmetry somewhat. It's use as a watering place for cattle for almost a hundred years has worn away some of the sharpness of the banks. Erosion has hidden its gravel bottom and shores but even so it still retains much of its charm and all of its memories to those of us who have known it a life time. Prospectors for oil say it was probably a blow-out of accumulated gases that occurred perhaps hundreds of years ago. It has been one of the handiworks of nature in the valley of the Nishna that will never be forgotten.

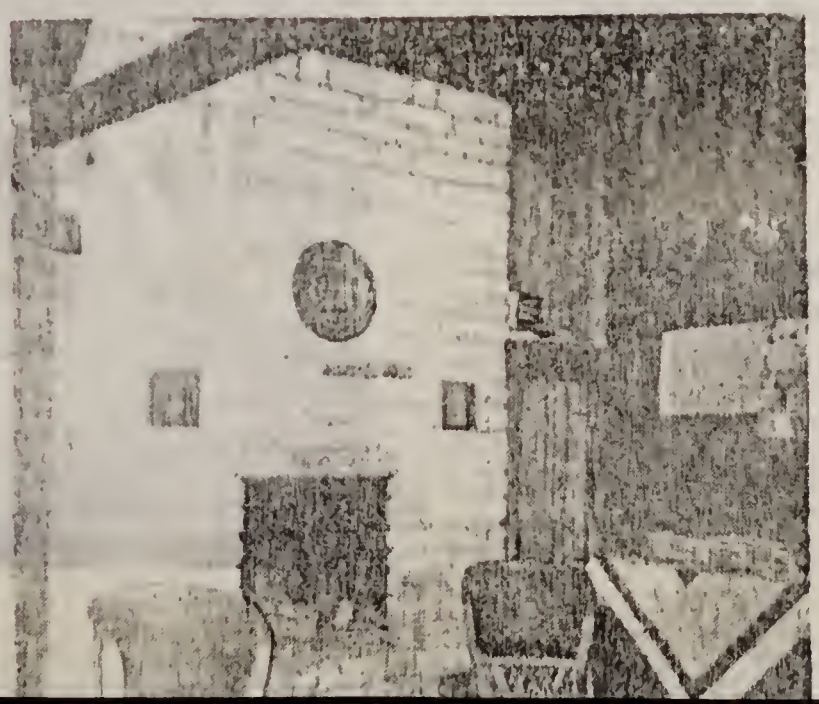
Joe and Henry Wearin
at Round Hole

Angus Cattle at Round Hole

Ozark Episode

1946

Throughout the years our family has had a fondness for many things, people, the land, our livestock, the permanence of our home and beauty wherever we found it. Only one thing has been lacking in Iowa —water areas for recreation. I have always been especially attracted by the sound of waves along a rocky shore. Early in the spring of 1946 we acquired a bit of land that dips its edges into the blue waters of the Lake of the Ozarks. We hope to complete a vacation home there before long, a sort of refuge where the family can escape the noise and humdrum of modern living. We have named it Timberlane. Next year we will tell you more about it.



Timberlane

1948

The cabin at the Lake of the Ozarks is just as delightful as ever. We made a few brief sojourns there during the past summer. We would have been much happier if the business at the farm had permitted us to spend more time there. The children had a glorious time in the water. "Mom" and the "Old Man" loved the peace and solitude. We are tucked away in the timber almost two miles by land from our nearest neighbor, no telephone, no man made sounds of any kind. It is a grand place to swim, to cruise along the shores in the boat or just to watch the days and the nights creep slowly over the water and through the woods.

Water sports at Timberlane

The Last Generation's Junk is This Generation's Treasure

1941

So many people have manifested an interest in our collections of Etruscan Majolica and Bells that we feel it appropriate to tell you a little about them. All my life I have collected first one thing and then another. When Lola came into the household she acquired the art or the sin, whichever way you look at it with little effort. In my case, it is no doubt an acquired instinct. I still have my father's collection of pocket knives. All her life my mother has gathered fine china and glassware, souvenir spoons and other things of beauty that appealed to her.

Our Majolica collection was started during our residence in Washington, D. C., inspired by a little squib in a household magazine. The first piece was a colorful leaf plate. From that day on we have searched every antique shop and nook and crannie wherever our travels took us. To that beginning has been added plates of all sizes, cups and saucers, mugs, pitchers, compotes, cake stands, jugs, large and small dishes, teapots, sugar and creamers, etc. It has been a colorful and until recently a comparatively inexpensive hobby. Of late, prices have increased and the extent of our acquisitions have declined correspondingly.

Bells have always fascinated me from the time I first heard our tiny silver call bell. This collection has not been developed very rapidly until the past two years and even then with reservations. They range from large old fashioned farm bells to tiny anklet bells worn by dancing girls in Java. There are various types of sleigh bells and other animal bells, call bells, school bells and bells of curious shapes or with unusual handles. There are a few old ones with ancient histories.

Hobbies

1948

Hobbies are part and parcel of our living at Nishna. We have told you a little about them in an earlier issue but they are always new and refreshing to us. They make life interesting, our evenings all too short and too few. Both of our daughters have been in on them up to their ears from the beginning. Becky collects key rings and monkeys. Martha devotes her attention to horse pins.

As usual "Mama" and I move from one collection to another. The field includes campaign buttons and badges, bells, Etruscan majolica, souvenir spoons, post cards, stamps, cook books, western pictures, odd shaped bottles, old glass, signed photographs, printed matter and maps pertaining to Iowa history and scrap books. Well, there is an end to it but it would take too long to reach it.

One of the most interesting of recent additions to our "collection of collections" is a representative group of articles brought to us from central Africa by Rev. and Mrs. Albert Wiley. Mrs. Wiley is my cousin, Helen Donner. She and Rev. Wiley have been missionaries for many years in that field. The group included two drums, native musical instruments, grass and fiber mats, wooden bowls and spoons, brass castings, wood carvings, a cross bow, combs, native metals, poisoned arrows and a number of other items. They visited us this summer while they were in the "States."

At the moment our attention is being devoted to phonograph records and has reached a new high. We had a nice small collection assembled by my family many years ago. To that group we have added some of the modern items, with special emphasis on children's stories and music, and speech records by noted people such as Franklin D. Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, William Jennings Bryan, Madam Chiang Kai Shek, George Bernard Shaw and many others. We also have an old type Edison machine with morning glory horn and have a lot of fun gathering ancient cylinders. If you are going to throw some away don't do it, just let us know. One of the interesting sidelines in the field has been a machine with which we make flat records of our own. They have often proved to be a source of hilarious entertainment.

Bottle Portraits

1956

Our hobbies have often been the subject of special feature articles in Wearin's Holiday Life. This year we have elected to tell you a little about our collection of Character Bottles. To define this term it means bottles that have been made in the shape of human beings, animals, birds, and many inanimate objects. The hobby had its beginning for us many years ago but did not attain fever heat until 1954. The first acquisition was a pair of blown, blue glass Virgin of Guadalupe bottles purchased in Old Mexico in 1930. The second treasure was a small, clear glass figure of a baby in a basket, known to collectors as Moses in the Bullrushes.

Since 1954 the collection has grown inordinately fast because of my interest in compiling data on the subject. The field is broad and largely unexplored. To my amazement I have found bottles in the shape of Presidents, Generals and Admirals, Kings and Queens, Uncle Sam, John Bull, soldiers, sailors, cowboys, ministers, coachmen, American Indians, Biblical characters, little children, fat Dutchmen, a little Bo-Peep and a regiment of others.

The animal kingdom, birds, marine life and the insect world are well represented. You can find horses, pigs, elephants, dogs, cats, owls, fish, turtles, lobsters and butterflies that are actually bottles.

The engenuity of designers has led them to fashion bottles in the shape of potatoes, apples, cigars, pipes, monuments, log cabins, guns, shoes, pretzels, hams and billy clubs—I might as well stop. So far I have not even caught sight of the end.

If the family can stand the strain, I hope to have a well illustrated book on the subject, ready for the market in a few months.

Otha D. Wearin examines character bottles.

Yesterday, Today & Tomorrow

1950

One of the things we like about farm life is that it presents an ever changing scene. Not only because of the seasons but by virtue of new developments in mechanical methods, new crops and building designs, crop rotations, fluctuating markets and a multitude of other projects. To be a success a modern farmer should know many things.

I am just old enough to remember a few transitions that remind me of one of my father's favorite expressions, "Things have changed since Willie died." Within my span of years we have gone from steam threshers, horses and extensive hand work to complete mechanization.

I plowed corn a half a day with a New Departure walking cultivator. At noon Father came home with a Badger, a two-wheeled cultivator with a seat on it. I thought I had struck it rich. If the weather wasn't too hot and you had a good team you could cultivate ten acres of corn in a day. Four horses on a gang plow were a common sight in almost every field. Horse powered mowers, dump rakes, sweeps and overshot stackers were the latest thing out. If a man shucked one hundred bushels of corn a day by hand and scooped it into the crib he had done a big day's work.

You would hardly recognize the farm today when compared to forty years ago. The boys who are associated with me, have a complete line of modern equipment. Tractors, including diesels, are the sole source of power. Four-row listers and cultivators plant and keep a crop clean in a fraction of the time required by the old methods. When the corn is ready one man with a two-row mounted corn picker can shuck a thousand bushels of corn a day with one man to haul in and one to handle the elevator at the crib. In the old days that would have been a day's work for ten good men and teams. The strain on the housewife's kitchen has been reduced accordingly.

In July the combine is rolled out of the shed and harvest begins when the wheat and oats are ready. Within my memory it was all cut with a horse-drawn binder and shocked, pending the long wait until the steam thresher and the neighbors arrived to begin the threshing. We threshed from farm to farm through the neighborhood for weeks. Farm women teamed up to cook for the gang. Some grew tired of waiting and stacked the grain bundles into round, plump cone shaped stacks for fall or winter threshing. Building one of those stacks was an art. My uncle, Walter Donner, was considered one of the best in the country.

Just recently Keith Bruce has started chopping all of our hay. If it is dry it can go into a round stack. If it is too wet for such a process, it can be chopped and stored in the trench silo for green ensilage.

Tractor-powered drill-like machines dig our post holes. Mechanical scoops load the manure. Portable elevators are hauled from place to place to move our grain and hay. Power hand saws, power drills and portable farm welders, paint spray outfits and innumerable other items of equipment on most farms perform tasks in a matter of minutes that used to require hours of tedious hand labor.

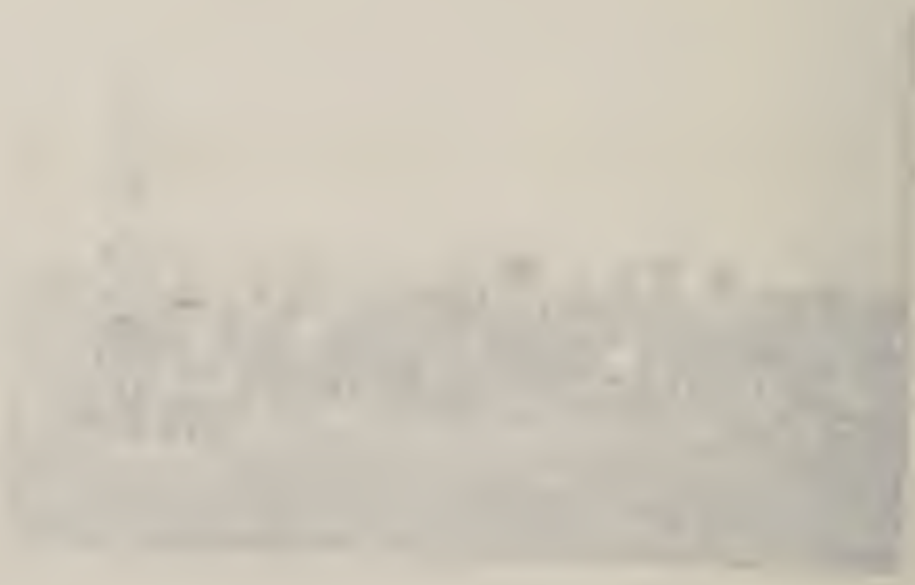
The farm home has changed equally as much if not more than the farm itself. Carrying cobs and coal to the kitchen and pumping water by hand are almost things of the past. Most farm wives cook with gas or electricity, have water in the house, electric mixers, refrigerators, deep freezers, vacuum cleaners, oil heat, electric light, telephone, radio and television.

Yes, things have changed on the farm "since Willie died." But the remarkable part to me is not the changing scene but that in spite of all our mechanization and labor saving devices we seem to have less time for friendship and the pleasantries of life. The mad rush from tractor to car to whirling kitchen mixer grows faster and faster.

Sometimes when we grudgingly take a few days and steal away to the Ozark Hills for a breather I have the sensation that I have been suddenly dropped from a roaring, speeding train into a beautiful blue and green bowl of solitude. There is not even the rush of an occasional speeding car, the sound of a distant train whistle or the shrill jangle of a telephone bell to break the delightful silence. There are only the songs of birds, the tinkle of rippling water or the laughter of children. Better find yourself a place in the woods somewhere and try it for a little while. You'll live longer.

Nishna Cattle

Keith Bruce and David on the New Diesel



Politics

1952

Over a period of years it has gradually "leaked out" that the editor of this little booklet is a Democrat and occasionally becomes embroiled in political campaigns. Lola says if we didn't have a calendar she could measure our married life by the campaign turmoil in the household every two years.

Nineteen fifty-two was no exception. I was an unsuccessful candidate for the Democratic nomination for Governor of Iowa. After country school was out Becky joined me and we campaigned together with the aid of Roland Reko of Des Moines, who drove us. Dale Spencer, also of Des Moines, operated our office for us in that city.

We will always think we could have won if we had been nominated. I have always been proud of the fact that I carried Mills county in 1928, the year of a Republican landslide. We carried the 7th district, also Republican, in 1932, '34 and '36. We think our Democrat and Republican friends would have carried it for us again in 1952 and that would have been enough to win.

It hurts to lose but we have always tried to do it gracefully and stay in the boat. We have known people who broke with the party and stopped working for the cause just because they lost. We have not been guilty of that sin. If a cause is right when you win with it, the same cause is right when you lose with it.

We have enjoyed all of our participation in public affairs. We feel that every citizen owes some time to the cause of good government. We have too many people who are so busy making a fortune that they don't want to take time out to work for a candidate or to hold public office. As a rule, those people are the first to criticise public officials, taxes or the way in which the party in power is conducting the state or the nation's business. We feel that the right to criticise should carry with it no less than the responsibility to vote.

To carry the thought a step farther, we would have better government if more capable people would make the necessary sacrifices to hold public office. You get an entirely different viewpoint of the other fellow's job if you get behind his desk and start doing his work yourself. We doubt if we will seek public office again ourselves but we are not ruling out the possibility. We have rendered service for ten consecutive years. But on the other hand no citizen's debt is ever completely paid to so great a nation as America. We are speaking politically now, not from the standpoint of military service.

Becky Greets Gov. Wm. S. Beardsley at Cedar Rapids, Iowa, during the primary campaign, while her Dad, who was seeking the democratic nomination for governor, looks on.

If all the people would go to the polls and vote at every election we would not need to have any fear of communism. The right to vote in secret is the most precious right of every American citizen. The goal of a one hundred per cent vote may be unattainable but it is a noble thing for which to strive at every general election. You should have more than monetary reasons for refusing to work for the party of your choice or to hold public office. Our household expects to continue its active participation in party and public affairs.

Nishna Vale Farm Office

1957

December 3rd, 1956 we began moving the Nishna Vale Farm office into the new building across the road from our residence. It was not completed until the last week of February, 1957.

The Clarinda Production Credit Association moved its Mills County field office to our building in January.

The official opening of the new building was held on April 6th. We were assisted by Mr. and Mrs. Don Bruce, Arlene Hultquist, Ruby Gamble, Mrs. M. K. Granteer, Mrs. Helen Bruce, Kenneth Bruce, Mrs. Steve Haines, Mrs. Henry Washburn, Mrs. Mabel Cramer and officers of Production Credit.

Fred and Barbara Schweser, the Houghton State Bank at Red Oak, Clarinda Production Credit, Mrs. Earl May, the Cecil Baker Commission Co. of St. Joseph, Mo. and others were responsible for a beautiful floral display. We were honored by approximately four hundred guests during the day and evening.

Mrs. Don Bruce served as the first secretary in our new farm office. In matters of accounting she was assisted occasionally on weekends by Ruby Gamble, who was one of our organization from 1955 until the summer of 1956.

Mrs. Junior Anderson (Arlene Hultquist) joined us on May 15th as secretary, accountant and keeper of the gift and antique shop. She is a Notary Public and writes hail insurance for the Hartford Insurance Co.

We are glad our friends have used the new building for a number of meetings during the course of the year. In addition to our open house the following have met with us:

Board of Directors, Clarinda Production Credit Association.
Board of Directors, Iowa School Organization.
Organization meeting of Mills County Historical Society.
Malvern High School dance, watermelon feed and hay ride.
Emerson Women's Club.
U. S. Highway No. 34 Improvement Association.
Hastings Women's Club (Historical Tour).
Mills County Citizens League.

All in all, we are very happy about our farm office building and the manner in which it has been received by our neighbors.

Nishna Vale
Farm Office

The Nishna Vale Gift Shop

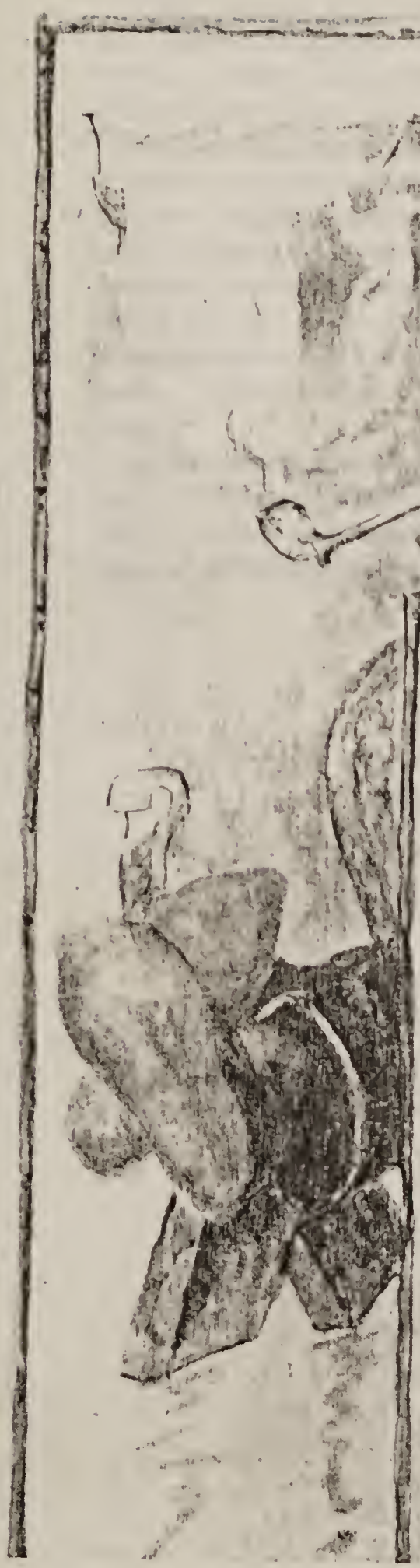
1957

Our gift and antique shop, housed in one portion of the new office building, has been well received locally. Each month a few more travelers find their way to our door.

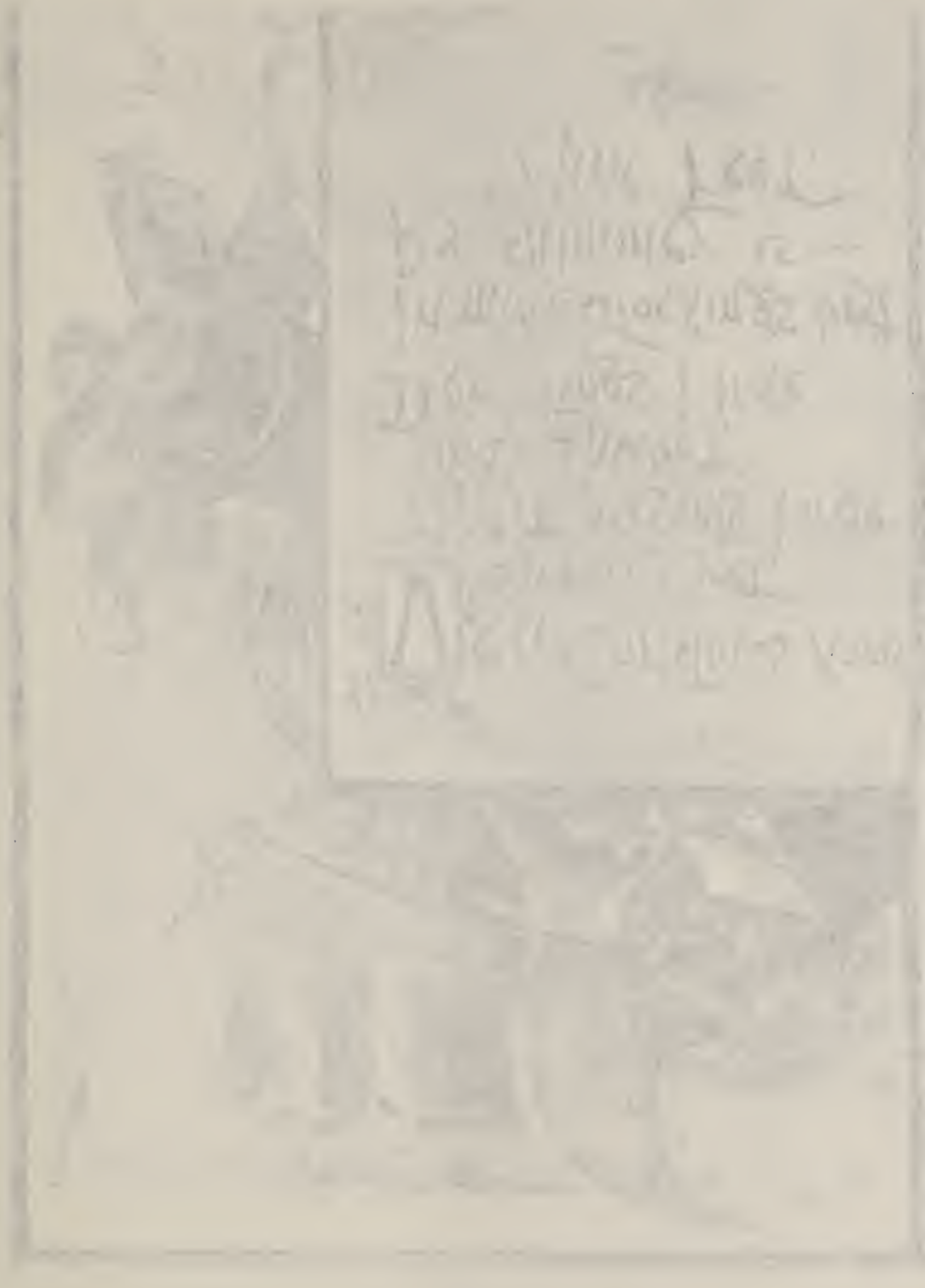
It is our purpose to promote Iowa handcrafts such as hand-woven fabrics, tooled leather, Iowa Indian arts, locally made ceramics, Frankoma Pottery, textile painting, costume jewelry set with Iowa stones (hand cut and polished), unusual gifts (reasonably priced) from the far corners of the world, and a few fine antiques. We hope to supply lovely and unique things to our local customers and stimulate an interest among travelers in the handcrafts of Iowa.

We expect to further promote our state through the publication of a series of booklets pertaining to the history and agriculture of the local area and hobby subjects to be offered for sale in the shop. Two titles "The Story of a Court House" and "I Collect Character Bottles" are now available.

Martha and Ada Haines in the Craft and Gift Shop



Ven Christmas koms
already yet,
Mit presents large
und shweet,
Der tings I like
In mine stockings best
Py chiminey is—
Mine Feet.



The reproduction of our hand-painted Christmas Greeting used on the cover illustration of the 1958 issue of Wearin's Holiday Life has attracted so much attention that we have decided to incorporate it in this small volume.

It has unusual significance for our family. My aunt, Mrs. W. C. Donner, Sr. (Corena Laughlin) was an artist of considerable ability. The illustration is a water color painting that she made as a Christmas gift for my father many years ago! "Corena's picture," as he called it, was one of his treasured possessions and is so classified today by his heirs. He had a great sense of humor and loved to find it in other people. "Corena's picture" symbolized that facet of his nature and of her's.

My father's enjoyment of a good joke was further exemplified by his attitude toward entertainment or as he expressed it, "sad shows and funny shows." He would never attend any but the latter type. His explanation was, "I have enough sorrows in my life without buying some more. When I spend money I want to buy some fun, or something pretty."

In discussing the art works of Corena Donner, it should also be noted that my mother, who studied under her, had some marked ability in that field. In our collection we have several very fine water-colors, crayons and oil paintings by the above charming ladies.

Part III

A Portfolio of Scenes and Action at Nishna

Nishna in winter.

The North Drive.

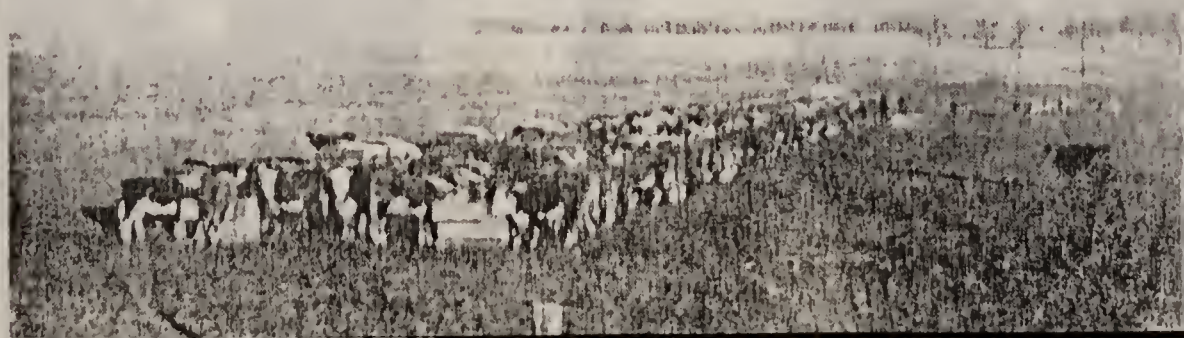
Barnyard from
the north lawn.

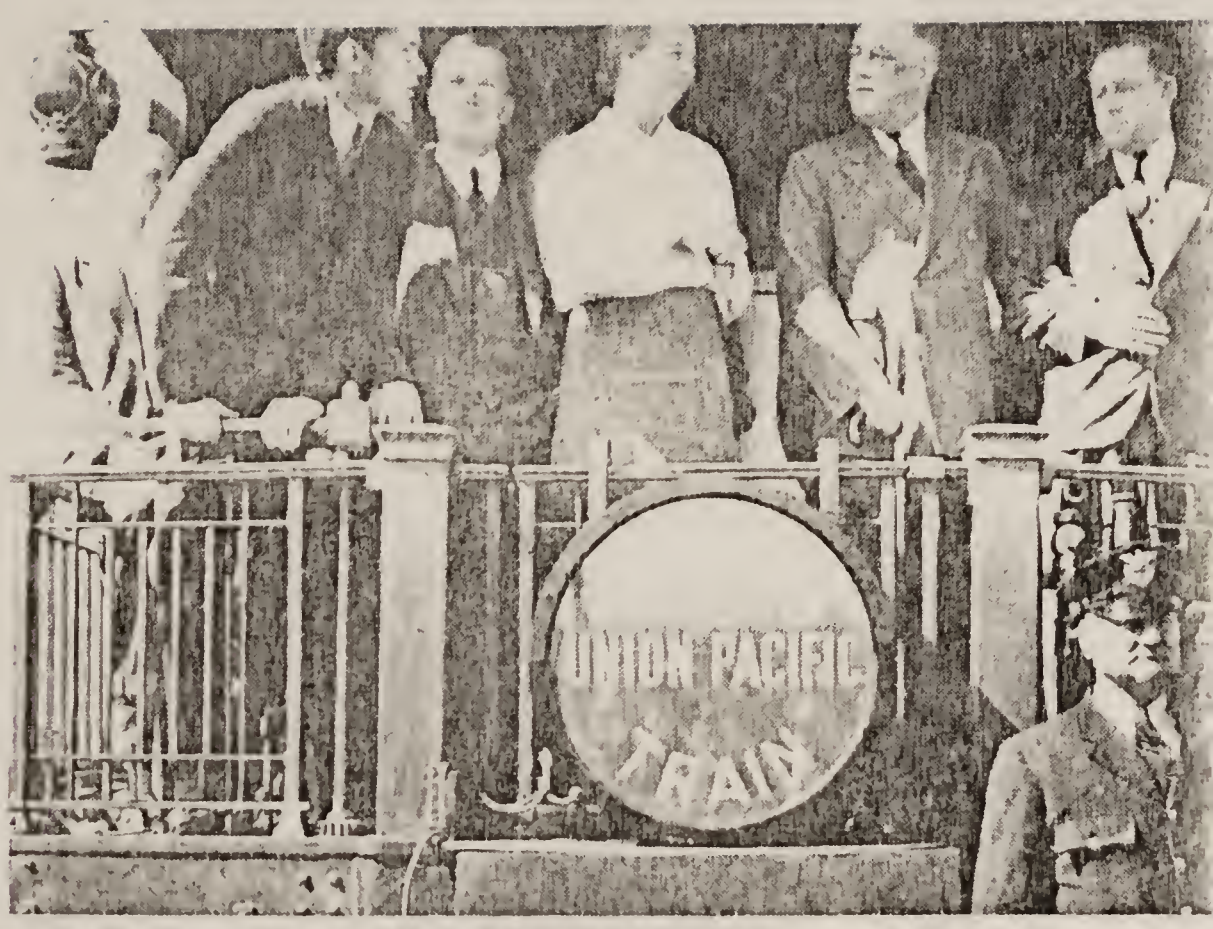
Thayer Co., Nebr.
Sod house on the
land entered by Otha
Wearin, 1870.

Becky Wearin and Bill Hyde
along the Nshna River.

Round bales and
round stacks.

Cattle on feed
at Nishna.

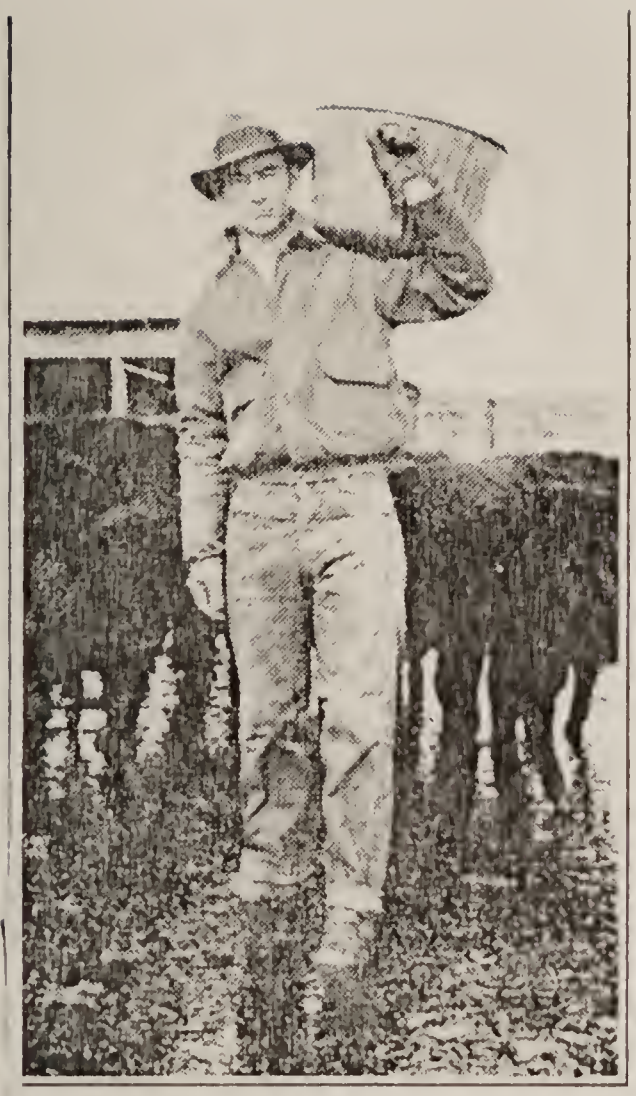




Congressman Otha D. Wearin on board President Franklin D. Roosevelt train, Council Bluffs, Iowa Terminal.

Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt and Mrs. Otha D. Wearin speak at luncheon of "73 Club," Washington, D. C., about 1935.

Left to right: Otha D. Wearin, Charles Brannen, Sec. of Agr., Oscar Chapman, Sec. of Interior, confer on agricultural and forestry problems, Des Moines, Iowa, June, 1949.



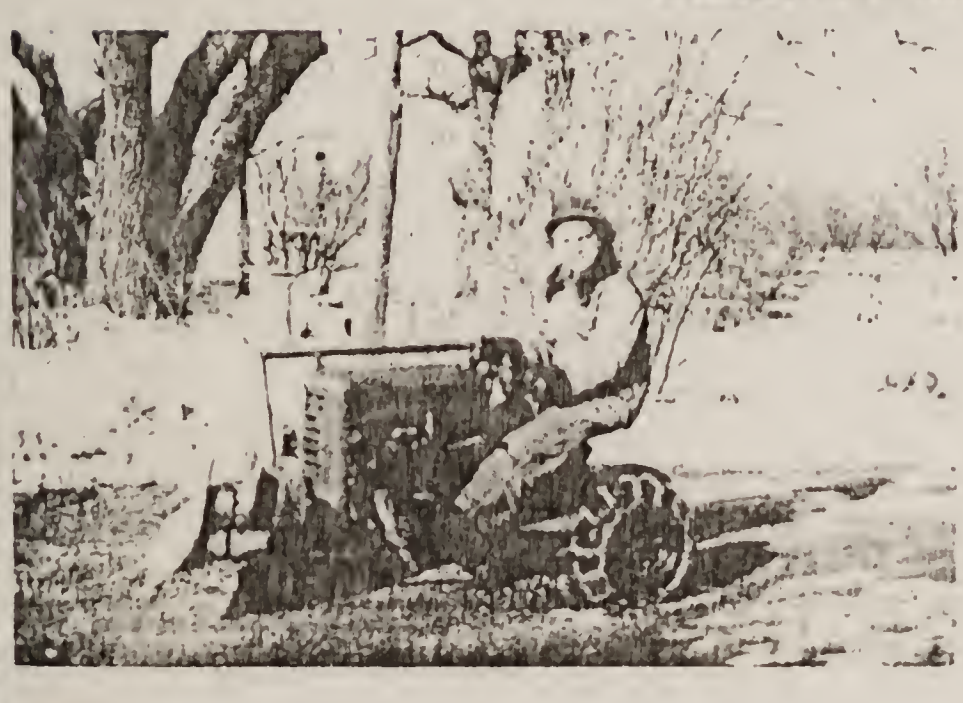
A portable blacksmith
shop stops at Nishna.

Otha in the
feed yard, 1932.

Left to right:
Charles O. Wearin,
Mary Valeria Wearin,
(Mrs. A. B. Washburn)
W. H. (Henry) Wearin,
Nishna, 1944.

The Wearin Family
1946.

Martha and Becky with Bobana, their toy terrier.



Becky on bantam tractor.

The girls inspect their horses.

Left to right:
Becky Wearin and Mary Jan Wilkins at the Washburn Wedding, Tabor, Iowa.

Martha and the
Merry-Go-Round Horses
on the west lawn.

Martha and Pokey

Prince Joe with Martha Jane Wearin Up.

Becky in her "model T"
escorted by Tuffy.

Martha and Becky
go for a drive.

Martha and Becky
on Pokey and Sugar

A 4-H
Mother-Daughter
Tea at Nishna.

Martha and Becky
inspect a deer killed
on the highway near
Nishna.

Martha chats with
Pepper and Tuffy at
the back door.

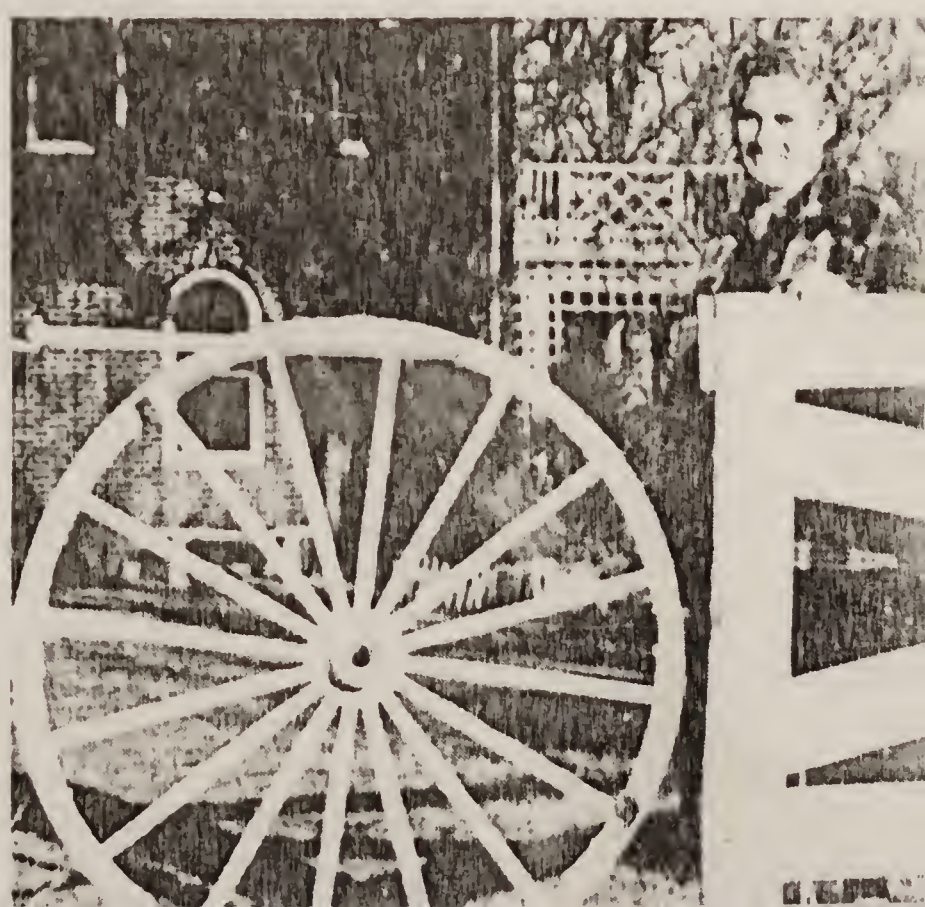
Mr. Ellsworth with some of his paintings at Nishna.

Mary Jane Wearin at her desk.

Becky and Clarence Ellsworth on steps of the little house.

Martha and Pepper inspect the former's new car.

Becky loading chickens for the county fair.



Lola at the Garden Gate.

7700841 70